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# IMAGINATION IN LANDSCAPE PAINTING

PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON.









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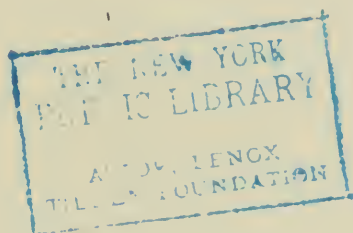
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IMAGINATION  
IN  
LANDSCAPE PAINTING



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FOOTBRIDGE OVER THE WILEY. By R. S. Shattuck.

IMAGINATION  
IN  
LANDSCAPE PAINTING

BY  
PHILIP GILBERT HAMERTON  
AUTHOR OF "THE GRAPHIC ARTS," "ETCHING AND ETCHERS,"  
"LANDSCAPE," ETC.

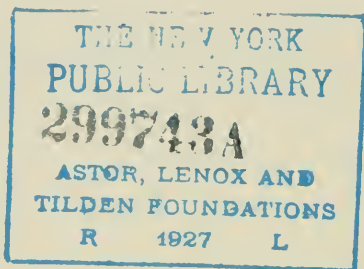
*WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS*



BOSTON  
ROBERTS BROTHERS

1895

11/12/12



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HOW WISE  
OUR  
FATHERS

University Press:  
JOHN WILSON AND SON, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.



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# IMAGINATION

IN

## LANDSCAPE PAINTING.



### I.

IS THE LANDSCAPE-PAINTER'S IMAGINATION OF  
A SPECIAL KIND?

THE imagination of the landscape-painter differs from that of other imaginative people only in the class of objects or phenomena with which it is concerned. The objects that occupy him are those which are easily visible on the surface of the earth, and the phenomena in which he takes an interest are the effects of light and color which seem to give to those objects a varying value and significance. He is interested in these things and appearances, not for themselves alone, but because he perceives in them certain obscure analogies with the moods of man.

Landscape-painters, like other men, may be endowed with the imaginative faculties in the most various degrees and in quite different orders. We shall have to discriminate between some, at least, of these in the course of the following chapters. For the present we must content ourselves with the simple assertion, to be maintained subsequently by proofs, that there is nothing peculiar in the imagination of a landscape-painter, except this, that it is occupied with objects and phenomena that interest him more peculiarly than others. Not that other people are necessarily without interest in these objects and phenomena, for if they were so, the productions of the landscape-painter would have no sale, and he could never win reputation. Thousands of passages in literature give evidence of a landscape-painter's tastes, and many seem to prove that the writer possessed exactly the kind of imagination which we are in the habit of attributing to painters. There is abundant evidence, too, of the presence of taste and imagination exercised with reference to landscape, in people who have no artistic training whatever, and who do not express themselves in literature. We know this by their evident delight in romantic natural



scenery, by their choice, when the opportunity is offered, of beautiful sites for their places of residence, and especially by an enjoyment of imaginative pictures which is not the less real because dissociated from the technical discussions of the studio. There is good evidence, even, that a large proportion of the outside public is really more imaginative than some of the landscape-painters themselves, for accurate, unimaginative landscape-painting is never widely popular, and the lowest popular forms of the art, as well as the highest, invariably appeal far more to the spectator's imagination than to any supposed accuracy in his knowledge. The views of places painted on the panels of steamboats, or the colored prints that are bestowed gratuitously on the purchasers of certain groceries, or the sketches of landscape on screens and trays, are probably the lowest forms of the art that deserve to be taken into consideration; and in all these you will find, I do not say any display of noble imaginative powers, but certainly far more the impulse to be imaginative than the anxiety to be accurate. This is only in accordance with what we know of the popular imagination in other things. We owe the development of all

early myths and legends to the common people, whilst the criticism that distinguishes between legend and history is always the product of a small cultivated class. There is, indeed, such vigor of imagination in the popular mind that the artist who is destitute of it cannot satisfy the instinctive needs of the people. They will be unmoved by his art, and however careful, however full of conscientious observation, it may be, they will feel it to be unsatisfactory, and therefore reject it as untrue.

## II.

### THE TWO SENSES OF THE WORD "IMAGINATION."

LITTRÉ marks the distinction in popular use between two meanings of the word Imagination. The first sense, according to him, is "a faculty that we have of recalling vividly, and of seeing, so to speak, objects that are no longer before our eyes." This is the first sense, but the second appears to involve the exercise of an additional faculty. Littré defines the second sense as, "particularly in literature and the fine arts, the faculty of inventing, of conceiving, joined to the talent of rendering conceptions in a lively manner. So we say, 'this poet, this painter has a great deal of imagination,' and we speak of 'the creative imagination.'"

Voltaire, in his "Philosophical Dictionary," said that there are "two kinds of imagination, one which consists in retaining a simple impression of objects, the other which arranges

the images so received, and combines them in a thousand ways."

Webster makes the distinction with equal clearness. He defines imagination in the first sense as "the image-making power; the power to create or reproduce an object of sense previously perceived; the power to recall a mental or spiritual state that has before been experienced." In the second sense, Webster says that imagination is "the representative power; the fantasy or fancy; the power to re-construct or re-combine the materials furnished by experience or direct apprehension; the complex faculty usually termed the *plastic* or *creative* power." Not satisfied with these two definitions, Webster goes farther and adds a third, defining imagination in this last and highest sense as "the power to re-create or re-combine with readiness, under the stimulus of excited feeling, for the accomplishment of an elevated end or purpose; in this sense, distinguished from *fancy*."

The reader will observe that Webster, in his second definition, makes imagination and fancy synonymous, whereas in his third he distinguishes them.

Webster says that Imagination and Fancy

are different exercises of the same general power, — the plastic or creative faculty; that "Imagination is the higher exercise of the two, and has strong emotion as its actuating and formative cause; whilst Fancy moves on a lighter wing, it is governed by laws of association which are more remote, and sometimes arbitrary or capricious."

Wordsworth had a distinction between Fancy and Imagination in his mind when he classified his poems; but if we examine them carefully, taking the poem "To the Sky-lark" as an example of Fancy (it having been so classed by its author), and that "To the Cuckoo" as an example of Imagination, we shall not find any greater difference than this, namely, that the tone of the first poem is less mysterious than that of the second. In both poems the first lines are equally gay and the last equally serious. If imagination is the reproduction of the images of things, neither one nor the other of the two poems has any claim to be imaginative, as there is no clear sight of an image in either, and the motive of the verses to the cuckoo is precisely the invisibility of the bird. The reason why the poet called his verses to the skylark fanciful, and those to the cuckoo

imaginative, is because, in the first, his imagination played about a fact, the joyful ascent of the lark, whilst in the second it played about a fictitious idea that the song of the cuckoo was not from a bird, but a mysterious voice without any bird's throat to make it. The fiction with regard to the cuckoo is carried far indeed when the poet, for the purposes of his art, tries to make us believe that the bird is always invisible; one would think that he had never lived in the country. As for me, I have seen the cuckoo many a time, and Gilbert White of Selborne once saw several cuckoos at once.<sup>1</sup> The inference seems to be that, in Wordsworth's conception, the Imagination acts more in supposing fictions than in evoking images of realities.

In the original edition of the second volume of "Modern Painters," Mr. Ruskin distinguished somewhat elaborately between Fancy and Imagination; but it is interesting to observe that, in the new handy edition of that portion of his great book, he frankly abandons the distinction in the following plain words:—

<sup>1</sup> The birds were skimming over a large pond and catching dragon-flies.

"In the first place,\*the reader must be warned not to trouble himself with the distinctions, attempted, or alluded to, between Fancy and Imagination. The subject is jaded, the matter of it insignificant, and the settlement of it practically impossible, not merely because everybody has his own theory, but also because nobody ever states his own in terms on which other people are agreed. I am, myself, now entirely indifferent which word I use; and should say of a work of art that it was well 'fancied,' or well 'invented,' or well 'imagined,' with only some shades of different meaning in the application of the terms, rather dependent on the matter treated than the power of mind involved in the treatment."

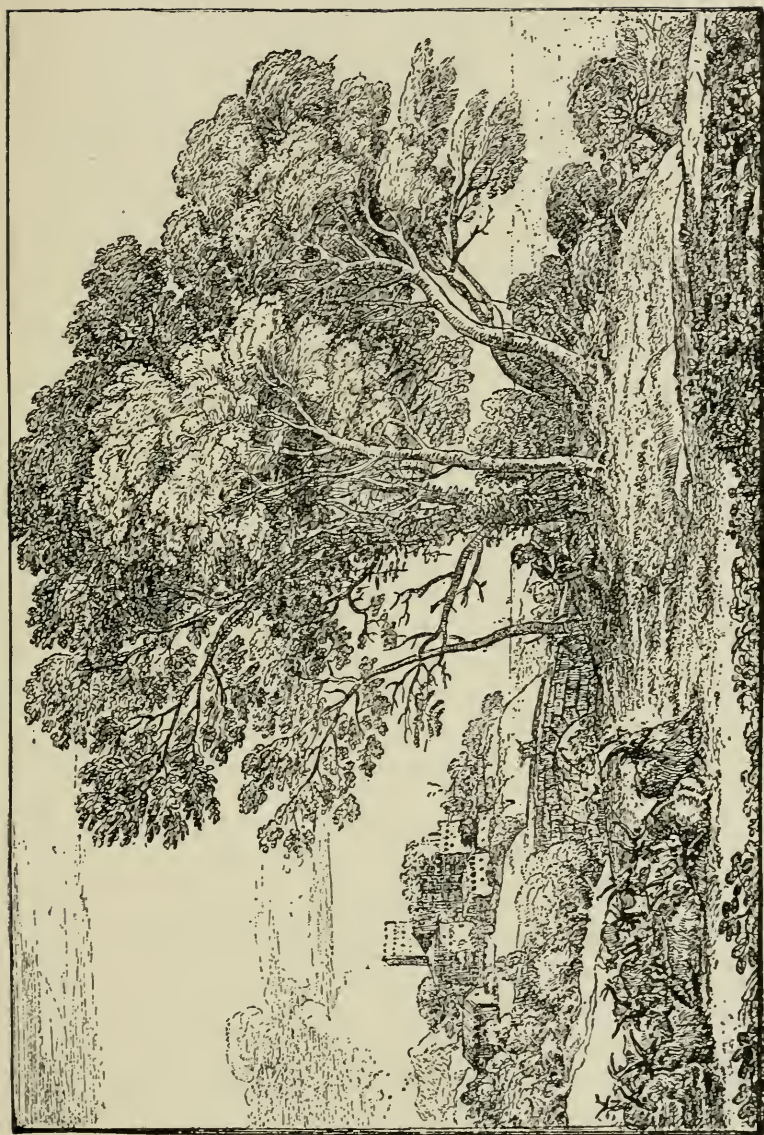
The distinction between Fancy and Imagination is, indeed, one of those which appear to be invented more for the exercise of a needlessly refined ingenuity than for any practical purpose, and it has the immense inconvenience of obliging a critic to be always on his guard in the employment of terms, for if he speaks of the imagination of one of the lighter and more graceful artists it may be objected that an artist of that calibre is not imaginative at all, but only fanciful; and when the critic has to deal with an artist whose imagination is sometimes grave and profound, and at other times disposed to play in a charming manner with



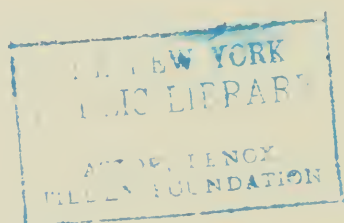
trifles, the most unprofitable objections may be raised against the use of either word. In short, this is one of those distinctions which afford opportunities for chicanery, and therefore no attention will be paid to it in these chapters. Whenever necessary, a distinction will be made between different phases or tempers of the one great faculty that is properly called the Imagination, but the faculty itself will always be called by one name.

For us, then, there will be only two senses of the word "imagination." We cannot well do without these two, though it may be objected that one of them is only memory,—an objection to be answered in the next chapter. For the present it may be enough to call the attention of the reader to one of those questions which often produce confusion in our thinking. Imagination is the power of seeing images of things that are absent; Imagination is also the power of combining and altering these images so as to fit or fuse them together in artistic wholes from which incongruous images are excluded. Now, here we have two powers which are at least so far independent that the first can exist without the second, though the second cannot exist without the first. Many





LE CHEVRIER. FROM THE ETCHING BY CLAUDE.



people can bring images before the mind's eye, who have not the smallest gift for combining them in works of art. On the other hand, there have been instances of good composing power in which it was not accompanied by that vivid representing power which seems to be the indication of a perfectly clear memory. Let us suppose the case of an artist with these two gifts, or a gift and an acquirement.

1. The power of recalling images of absent things.

2. The power of representing these images in painting.

Would you call the works of such an artist imaginative paintings? Most probably not. You might call them truthful, but not imaginative. It is even possible that you might be so deceived by their fidelity as to think that not even the memory had anything to do with them, and that they were painted entirely from nature. I remember an instance of this. A painter, whose memory was very good, relied upon it for the materials of a certain work which was afterwards written about as being obviously painted from nature, and as having the usual defects of pictures or studies executed out-of-doors. Nobody would call such a work

imaginative, and yet it resulted from the artist's power of recalling images, and it was the very strength of the memory which made the work seem as if it had not been painted from memory. In other words, the image-recalling faculty was so strong that it could not be believed in, and its results were attributed to something else.

Let us now suppose the case of an artist with an additional gift, that of imagination in the second sense, and we shall see if he is likely to meet with greater justice. Nature and his own labors together have armed him with these three talents:—

1. The power of recalling images of absent things.
2. The power of representing these images in painting.
3. The power of fusing images into pictorial wholes.

I should say that an artist, so gifted, would have every chance of being recognized as what we call an imaginative artist, and that the recognition would be due to the third talent especially. But the first and third equally belong to imagination. The true distinction I take to be this, that the power of recalling

images with clearness is imagination of the more ordinary kind, though it is more usually called memory, whilst the power of combining these images in such a manner as to make them into works of art, is the gift of artistic invention, which is very much rarer than the other. But if the first is only memory, why not simply call it so? The reason is that it is a peculiar kind of memory, in which an *imago* is distinctly present. If I remember what a man said to me, that is verbal memory; but if his face, figure, costume, attitude, and expression, with the effect of light upon him as he spoke, are all present to me at the same time, then an *imago* appears to me, and I possess the faculty of simple or ordinary imagination. If several such *imagines* combine themselves in my mind's eye so as to form pictorial compositions, governed and ordered by artistic motives, then I possess that faculty of artistic invention which artists call Imagination. The kind of imagination which leads to mechanical invention will have to be considered briefly in a future chapter. It is very nearly related to artistic invention, but differs from it in one important particular.



### III.

#### OF IMAGES IN THE MIND.

THE subject of the distinctness of images in the mind has occupied the attention of scientific men and teachers of drawing more seriously since it has been understood that the clearness of the image varied in different brains, according to their constitution, and also that in some brains the power of evoking clear images could be very greatly increased by culture.

I regret not to have Mr. Francis Galton's inquiry on this subject before me, but remember enough of it to know that he proposed a series of questions to different people with the object of ascertaining the degree of clearness attained by the image in different cases, and that the results were more various than would have been anticipated by any one who had not given some special attention to the subject. The common impression is that all people remember much in the same way, and each person believes that the usual way of remembering is his own

way. The truth is, however, that memory acts in many ways that do not concern us here: for example, there is the memory of musical sounds, which may be quite distinct from recalling the visible images of printed notes, as many people remember music who are unable to read the notes; and there is the memory of what people have *said*, which is not the same as being able to recall the image of a printed page, and reading from it in the mind.<sup>1</sup> Another very curious and remarkable fact about memory is, that it may carry away a very clear and definite abstract of some material object which is, nevertheless, not at all an image of the object as it was seen by the bodily eye. There are architects and lovers of architecture who, after visiting a cathedral, carry away plans and sections of the edifice in their minds, yet, as the building is entire, they cannot have seen any plans and sections of it in the material form. What they have seen is a succession of perspective views, outside and inside, varying with every step taken during their visits, yet these views

<sup>1</sup> Taine speaks of sounds as having also their images, because a musician remembers them. This is employing the word "image" in a very extended sense. It will be convenient for our purpose if we take the word always to mean a visible image, that is, something visible with the mind's eye.

have not left clear images of themselves, and have only contributed to form an abstraction that has never been seen.<sup>1</sup> It is probable that the memory of Cæsar was an abstracting military memory, as his "Commentaries" are quite remarkable for the absence of ocular impressions; indeed, they might have been written by a blind man from information given by others. To his mind an army would be a certain measurable quantity of force that could be applied to counteract another quantity of force, which it was his business to estimate; he would probably not see the soldiers in his mind's eye, as Homer or Virgil would. There may be the clearest abstract ideas when the opportunity for making images is denied. For example, a friend writes to you that he is building a boat which will carry 450 square feet of canvas, and have a ton of lead in her keel. Now, there are distinct reasons why it is impossible for you, without further information, to form any image of that boat in your mind. You know nothing about the model of her

<sup>1</sup> In this case, however, the lover of architecture may first form an ideal image of a plan or section in his mind, and afterwards remember that image as distinctly as if he had drawn it on paper.



hull, nor the kind of rig adopted; but, notwithstanding this ignorance, notwithstanding the impossibility of forming an image, every boating man will have as clear an idea of the sailing-force possessed by such a boat as of the financial force that there is in a definite sum of money. Here we are in the region of arithmetic, but of arithmetic aided by practical experience, as nobody who depended on figures only could form any notion of sailing-force in his mind.

In all cases of this kind, when we think without images, there is a substitution of a sign for the visible image. In the present case, the sailing-force is represented by the figures 450 for the area of canvas, and 1 for the weight of ballast, but it might equally be represented by letters or any other conventional sign, representing a certain amount of sailing-force. The electricians have lately adopted the terms *volts*, *ampères*, and *ohms* to represent electrical force,—terms which must be entirely dissociated from visible images in their minds, and yet convey to them far more accurate ideas of the force employed than we should derive from seeing batteries and coils.

It appears certain that a large class of thinkers dispense with visible images by substituting signs, but these thinkers are the opposite of painters, they approach more to mathematicians. A successful painter said that he believed there was a simple preliminary test by which the presence of a natural gift for painting might be ascertained. Let the aspirant take any book in which the actions of men were narrated or represented, — a volume of Macaulay's history or a play of Shakespeare, — and observe whether, whilst he reads, visible images of the persons appear to his mind's eye, or whether the characters are names for him and bundles of qualities or faults. If the history or play seems to be continuously illustrated by a succession of visible images, moving like actors on a stage, then the reader has the natural faculties of a painter, and needs only practice to paint well. This seems possible at first, but it does not take into consideration the necessity for the technical gifts by which a painter translates the images he sees into the painted images of the picture. If he has not the craftsman's talent of copying cleverly from the living model, it is evident that he will not be able to paint better from a

phantom in the mind. Still, there can be no doubt that this test is enough to determine the presence or absence of Imagination in the primary sense of the word — that is, the power of evoking images. The reader may amuse himself, if he pleases, by applying a test of this kind to his own mental constitution. I will write down successively three or four words, and the reader may take note whether they bring images before his mind or not, it being only postulated that he is not to *seek* for images, as they ought to appear spontaneously and at once. The first word shall be *Royalty*. Now, have you seen anything in the mind's eye? For me, I have just seen the Queen, in the state coach, going to open Parliament, with Prince Albert by her side. The impression was very vivid, and is, in fact, nothing but a very old recollection suddenly revived; but why should her Majesty be in the state coach? Why was she not sitting in a chair, as I have seen her since, dressed like any other lady? The reason evidently is that the word "Royalty" had suggested the idea of perfectly regal state. The next word shall be *Aristocracy*. It may be considered either as representing an abstract principle or a class in society; but we

may see representatives of the principle or the class. Does the reader see anything? I see some gentlemen and ladies very well dressed, riding on very beautiful, well-groomed horses. The vision is very distinct in parts; it is a sunny afternoon in summer, the nearest horse is a bay, and the rider has white trousers; the other horses are darker, and their riders not so distinctly seen, but they are evidently English people. Now, for a contrast, let us try *Democracy*. What do you see? The Agora at Athens, full of citizens in ancient Greek dress, or a modern crowd in the United States? My vision (it came clearly on writing the word) is a group of factory workers coming out of a mill in Lancashire. I see them plainly enough: the men have paper caps on their heads, the women cover their heads with shawls, and the foremost man has his hands in his pockets, thereby lifting up his waistcoat, which is double-breasted and has brass buttons, the two lowest being unfastened.<sup>1</sup> Another day, *Roy-*

<sup>1</sup> Many other details might have been given. For example, the mill is on the right side — it is built of stone; there are cottages on the other side of the street, and they are of brick. I do not remember having seen the place in reality, but see it now as a real place, or nearly so, though not with the bodily eye.

*alty, Aristocracy, Democracy*, may call up quite different images, such as a king on a throne, the interior of the House of Lords, and a Parisian mob, but there will always, for me, be *something visible* in association with such words, and so, I believe, it is with all who have this kind of imagination. The reader will, perhaps, find a similar experience in his own case. If he is a painter, who has worked much from the figure, the images he sees in his mind's eye will probably be far more clear and distinct than mine ; if he has never drawn or painted anything, they are likely to be less distinct. The practice of graphic art, especially in color, improves the power of recalling images, and thereby educates the primary kind of imagination, though it is not proved that it can do much for the secondary or combining imagination. Even the sight of correct drawings may be of use, and that is why it is so desirable to have them on the walls of schoolrooms. A boy, who has any imagination at all, is sure to see images whilst he reads, so that if you can help him to imagine with some approach to correctness, you will have spared him many erroneous conceptions. Here is an example, a very absurd example, of what I mean. On

first becoming acquainted with Virgil at a very early age, a certain schoolboy used to see Æneas dressed as an English clergyman, rather portly in form, and carrying a thick, silver-headed cane. The reason for this was the recurrent epithet "pius," and as a clergyman seemed to be the embodiment of piety, the schoolboy did this tailoring for Æneas. On his re-reading the "Æneid" in later life, lo! the old familiar portly clergyman reappeared, though he had been quite forgotten in the interval, and it was as much as the now mature reader could do to expel him finally from the brain, and substitute a Trojan prince.<sup>1</sup> Here the faulty childish imagination required to be educated, and we may be quite sure that the imaginations of uneducated people are continually playing them such tricks. The country peasant who hears about Solomon's temple will fancy a building of some kind, but in the absence of all architectural knowledge the image that presents itself to him will probably

<sup>1</sup> The reader will please bear in mind that we are considering *the image only*, which comes within the mind's vision involuntarily. Every schoolboy knows quite well that Æneas was a Trojan commander and prince, and that he could not have been dressed like a modern Englishman, whether cleric or layman.



be something like the handsomest building in the next market-town.

When the brain is in a healthy state, the image may be clearly visible by the mind's eye, but it will never confound itself with realities, it will not seem to be visible with the bodily eye; in a word, there will be no hallucination. Taine quotes from Brierre de Boismont the case of an English portrait-painter who had a wonderful power of remembering faces, and cultivated it to such a degree that he could see the absent model "sitting on a chair as distinctly as if real, and even with forms and colors more lively and decided." "From time to time," said the artist himself, "I looked at the imaginary figure and painted; then I interrupted my work to examine the pose, exactly as if the original had been before me. Every time that I fixed my eyes on the chair I could see the man." To cultivate the image-evoking power to such a degree as this is one of the most dangerous experiments that can be made upon the human brain. In this case, over-culture led to an inability to distinguish between the phantom and the reality; then came mental confusion, and the patient had to be placed in an asylum, where he re-

mained for thirty years. On his restoration to health, he found that the old power of painting from the phantom still remained, but his medical advisers would not permit him to exercise it. Efforts of the imagination which are easily borne by one brain may be fatal to another. There have been famous chess-players who could play eight or ten games at once without seeing the boards. Labourdonnais (M. Taine tells us) played two games in this manner, but on one occasion he attempted three, and the effort cost him his life. Inaudi, the most wonderful mental arithmetician who ever became famous, can see an image in his mind of a large blackboard covered all over with small figures, and read them correctly *in their places*, though he has never seen the board itself, and he has only been told where the figures were written, and that some hours before.<sup>1</sup> Here the image has to be constituted in the mind before it can be consulted, and it must evidently be quite a clear image all over, not distinct in some parts only and obscure in others. Being

<sup>1</sup> The figures may be statements of thirty or forty arithmetical problems, with their answers, entirely disconnected from each other. Inaudi remembers not only each problem, and its answer, but also its place upon the board. This is very like remembering all the details of a picture.



much interested in the production of mental images, I asked Inaudi if this effort fatigued him, and his answer was that he was not yet conscious of any fatigue from it. I then put a further question of much import, — “ Do figures and arithmetical problems haunt you in your hours of leisure? ” “ Not in the least,” he said ; “ I am very fond of reading and of fishing, and I never see or think of figures when occupied with those amusements.” This is an example of the image-making power in great strength, and at the same time in perfectly healthy action. The images evoked may be as clear as photographs, but they ought not to haunt the brain.

## IV.

### DANGEROUS IMAGINATION.

WE have attempted, in the preceding chapters, to show that imagination in its primary sense<sup>1</sup> must be the seeing of images in the mind's eye, and that the images so seen are not illusions. When the images acquire what the French call *extériorité*, that is to say, when they appear to be seen with the physical eye as if they were external realities, then they are no longer imaginings, but hallucinations, and the condition of the brain which is subject to these hallucinations is so near to insanity, that the victim remains sane only just so long as he is able to say to himself, "The thing that I see there is not real, although it appears real

<sup>1</sup> To anticipate a possible misconstruction, it may be well to add that in the secondary or usual sense of the word imagination means far more than this. I insist, however, on the clear-seeing of images in the mind as especially essential to the imagination of a painter.

for the moment ; it is nothing but a projection from the brain." So soon as he loses this faculty of recognizing the hallucination for what it is, and takes it for the reality which it appears to be, he has become insane.

Here we have the exact reason why genius has a certain relationship to insanity. The power of raising up clear images before the mind's eye is not to be gained without making a step in the direction which may lead ultimately, if a certain degree of clearness is passed, to dangerous hallucination. The stories told of Shelley and other imaginative persons who have had occasional hallucinations, show the peril of constantly cultivating the imaginative faculty, even without that most powerful of all forcing which is given by the practice of the graphic arts. Here is a short extract from Rossetti's life of Shelley : —

"On the 6th of May (1822) Shelley and Williams were walking on the terrace of the house in a moonlight evening, when the poet grasped his companion's arm violently and stared hard at the surf, exclaiming, 'There it is again ! There !' He ultimately 'declared that he saw, as plainly as he then saw me (Williams), a naked child rise from the sea, and clap its hands as in joy, smiling at him.'"

Nothing can be easier than to trace this hallucination to its real source in the habitual imaginings of the poet. Shelley was passionately fond of the sea, and most tenderly fond of children, so that both frequently occupied his poetic imagination. I open his works quite at random, and find the two together in a stanza of the "Revolt of Islam":—

"Woe could not be mine own, since far from men  
I dwelt, *a free and happy orphan child,*  
*By the seashore,* in a deep mountain glen,  
*And near the waves,* and through the forests wild  
I roamed."

The second canto of the same poem begins thus:—

"The starlight *smile of children;*"  
and the second stanza of that canto begins with this verse:—

"In Argolis *beside the echoing sea.*"

The thirtieth stanza ends with these lines:—

"All things became  
Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,  
Earth, *sea,* and sky, the planets, life, and fame,  
And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame."

In the thirty-first stanza the child appears again:—

"*And this beloved child* thus felt the sway  
Of my conceptions gathering."

Opening again the same poem, this time in the twelfth canto, I find the following association of waves with a child, though they are river waves:—

“As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder,  
A boat approached, borne by the musical air  
*Along the waves*, which sung and sparkled under  
Its rapid keel. A wingèd shape sate there;  
*A child*, with silver-shining wings, so fair  
That, as her bark did through the waters glide,  
The shadow of the lingering waves did wear  
Light, as from starry beams; from side to side,  
While veering to the wind, her plumes the bark did guide.”

It is needless to multiply quotations; enough has been quoted to show that waves and children were essential parts of Shelley's poetical world. When writing the verses quoted, his imagination had realized them to the mind's eye, and the vision narrated by Williams was no more than a translation of an old mental vision into an external shape. The alarm felt by Shelley at the moment is the inevitable and peculiarly horrible dread which the mind feels when there is no longer a clear distinction between the imagined and the actual. How is a man to guide himself in a world where some beings are real, and others, who seem not less real, are intangible phantoms of the brain?

That dwelling upon images in the mind, which is the mental habit of the poet, is, however, less likely to increase the clearness of the mental image, with the tendency to exteriority, than the far closer studies of the painter. What painters call "study" is the impressing of images on the brain, and it differs essentially from literary study in this, that the student of books sees the object of his study with the mind's eye only (the paper and type of a book being so indifferent that they only attract attention when one is not reading), whereas the painter observes with the bodily eye and the mind's eye at the same time. All the studies of a painter are, in fact, directed to two purposes: one is to imitate or interpret the appearances of things, but the other is to fix images clearly in the memory; therefore the imagination of the painter is in quite a special sense a trained and cultivated imagination. If Shelley saw the child clearly, he being a poet, it is probable that a painter, with his more perfect education of the eye and the eye's memory, would have seen the child still more clearly, both before and after reaching the point of hallucination.

## V.

### THE TRAINING OF THE MEMORY.

THE memory of things seen has often been cultivated by painters in certain special directions for their own purposes. All landscape-painters are compelled to cultivate it for the representation of transient effects, and of many transient forms also, especially the forms of clouds; but this individual culture of the memory does not afford us such good opportunities for observing its results, as the simultaneous culture of many different memories in a school. M. Lecoq de Boisbaudran, who was at one time Professor at the Imperial School of Drawing in Paris, and at the Lycée St. Louis, was the first teacher known to us who cultivated the memory systematically and took careful notes of the results. The following replies, taken from his valuable little work on the subject, will show the wonderful power of training to increase the clearness of the image. It will



be understood that the image is always seen with the mind's eye only; and notwithstanding the extreme clearness that it may sometimes attain, does not pass into the dangerous "exteriority" of Shelley's child upon the waves.

In answer to a question about his way of drawing from memory, one pupil says, "I try to imagine the absent model, but only see him in a confused way." Another says, "I see the model in my head." A third replies that he sees the model better with his eyes shut. Then comes the question, "How do you manage when the model, or rather the image of the model, is too confused, or disappears?" To this one reply is that after making an effort the model becomes more visible, that sometimes the model disappears altogether, but that by application of the mind it can be recovered. Another pupil answers that the image appears confused as a whole, but that if he applies his attention to a detail only it becomes clear enough to be drawn, and then the first detail helps him to recover a second, and so on from one to another till he is able to reconstruct the whole.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This recovery by detail is extremely interesting. I have often attempted to recover images by that process, but have



After exercising the memory by a systematic training for four months, all the pupils declared that the image was much more distinct than formerly, and that if it disappeared from the mental vision it could be recalled almost at will.

In answer to the question, "What means do you employ to fix the model in the memory?" one pupil said, "I draw it repeatedly;" but another said, "I make observations on dimensions, forms, and colors." The master said that the latter of these two answers was by far the more satisfactory to him, as it proved intelligent observation, and not merely a mechanical repetition of labor.

Another remarkable result of this systematic training, which had not been thought of or schemed for when it was first instituted, was that when the pupils drew from nature they were able to work for a longer time after looking at the model, and yet that their work was quite as accurate as it had been in former years when they referred to the model frequently.

The cultivation of the memory may be *generally* found that when the image did not come in a complete shape recovery by detail would leave some hiatus. The pupils of M. de Boisbaudran had, however, the advantage of beginning the systematic training of the ocular memory at a comparatively early age.

ried a step farther, in this way. The pupil who has been accustomed to drawing from nature may be told simply to *look* at an object for a short time, and to draw it afterwards from memory in another place. This is the ultimate result of training the artistic memory, and it is infinitely valuable to a landscape-painter, as it enables him to carry away transient forms and effects.

A skilful French landscape-painter, Nazon, whose pictures always attracted attention at the *Salon*, and deserved it, made it a rule never to sketch from nature, but to observe with the closest attention, taking mental notes only, after which, on returning to the house, he would paint a study of what he had seen. This was an excellent way of dealing with transient effects, for this reason: Suppose an effect lasts five minutes; if you are not drawing you can give the five minutes entirely to observation, but if you are drawing you will spend half of them, at least, in looking at your paper and your pencil-marks.

It is well known that any artist who has been accustomed to work from memory, can copy a picture without carrying any visible sketching apparatus into the gallery where it

is exhibited. He has nothing to do but learn the picture by heart. Suppose it to be Gainsborough's *Watering Place*. The process of learning it by heart would be first to take note of the principal objects and their positions. The wagon is descending a steep bank; there are four horses in a zig-zag position, the two first beginning to drink; there is a little hand-railed bridge with a man on it; on the opposite side of the stream there is a big denuded trunk to the right, and farther off we see a rich clump of full-foliaged trees on rising ground to the left. These things having been well noticed, the picture may be mentally divided into four squares, or rather oblongs, and the contents of each division observed. This would be quite enough for the first sketch. Afterwards the parts would be corrected, and details added from fresh observations as the work progressed.

The aid of science may be called in to help the memory of what is observed in nature. This has always been done by figure-painters with the study of anatomy, especially the anatomy of the bones, which give a permanently useful memorandum for the lengths of limbs and parts of limbs, and for their possible attitudes. Landscape-painters have usually treated

science with more indifference, but its utility to them as a help to memory is perfectly indisputable. A painter will surely remember gneiss, sandstone, or slate, more accurately if he thinks of them under those names than if he confounds them all together in his memory as being only "rocks." He will remember poplar and pine more distinctly than "trees," and if he has a clear idea in his mind of the difference between *pinus sylvestris* and other pines, he will paint *pinus sylvestris* the more faithfully. I cannot imagine a more efficacious help to memory than the clear and accurate knowledge of the characteristics of species. Which of these two series of observations is likely to recall the scene described the more vividly?

1. A castle on a rock with trees about it.

2. A castle of pure Norman architecture standing on a granite rock, at the foot of which is a clump of oaks. On the steep slope of the rock are a few birches, and just under the walls of the castle are two ash-trees and a buckthorn.

The difference between these two memoranda is exactly that between the two following, and nobody would dispute the greater utility of the second.

1. A house with a group of animals.
2. A thatched Highland cottage, with three cows of the Highland breed, two goats, a pony, and a colley dog.

Notwithstanding the obvious usefulness of science as a help to memory, there are still to be found landscape-painters who despise it, and who look upon the most prudently limited study of botany and geology as a trifling waste of time. The prejudice against botany is founded on the erroneous idea that botanical study is always microscopic (because a botanist has occasional recourse to the microscope), and that such study is incompatible with the grand style in painting. But to notice the manner in which a walnut-tree throws out its fine strong arms, is just as much a botanical study as the dissection of its flower, and to see a distinction in texture between the bark of the walnut and that of a beech is to have made a botanical observation already. In Schacht's valuable work on trees, a strictly scientific book including microscopic study, there are many observations of a kind likely to help the memory of a landscape-painter. Here is a specimen of the notes concerning ramification: —

“The regularity of ramification which exists in such a high degree in our Pine, in a more restricted manner in the Fir, which is hardly recognisable in the *Epicea*, and has totally disappeared in the Larch, this regularity may be still observed, more or less distinctly, in trees with membranous leaves. The arrangement and direction of branches are fixed characteristics of each species of tree. The Beech, when it grows freely, spreads out its branches in a direction nearly horizontal, and its twigs take the same direction. The same tree, when in a confined situation, directs its principal branches upwards, and its twigs only begin to spread when they reach the light. The Birch produces many branches which rise in forming an acute angle, whereas the young sprays, which are very slender, hang with an arched curve. Meanwhile, the central branch <sup>1</sup> of the Birch grows powerfully upwards. The more the branches are developed, the weaker they become, and the more the tree bows its head, as, for example, in the weeping-birch. The Oak is characterised by a very strong ramification, but it is most irregular, which results from the death of terminal buds and that of certain branches. In the Alder, the principal branches form an acute angle with the trunk, whereas the twigs from these branches spread out horizontally.”

<sup>1</sup> I should consider this as strictly a continuation of the stem even to the very top of the tree, where it ends in a point as fine as the terminal sprays of the branches.



Here we have knowledge of the most valuable kind for a landscape-painter concentrated in a very short space. It is given here simply as a specimen, but it would be easy to find many other passages in botanical and geological works that would be equally useful in giving precision to the memory of a landscape-painter. If he is really observant he will make observations for himself, which are applicable to all rocks and trees of the same species.

The value of special knowledge in educating the memory of the eye, is shown in nothing more decidedly than in architecture. A professional architect, or even an amateur, who has seriously studied good typical examples of different styles, is able to learn a building by heart when the uneducated observer will not retain any distinct impression of it. As this education of the memory is a subject that interests me, I have carefully observed to what degree those who have never studied architecture are able to retain impressions of buildings; and, although nothing can astonish me now, I was at one time amazed beyond all expression by what seemed the incomprehensible inaccuracy of the uneducated memory with regard to buildings that had actually been seen and

visited. Provincial or foreign visitors will go to London and York, and afterwards be quite unable to say, of two photographs, which is York Minster and which is Westminster Abbey. They sometimes even fail to distinguish between the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, or between the National Gallery and the British Museum. People will go to visit a country house of the most marked architectural character, and not be able to remember the most obvious characteristics of its structure, such as whether the front stands in a straight line or has advancing wings, or whether the windows are in single lights or divided by stone mullions. All that the uneducated in architecture appear to be able to retain about buildings is the impression of their size, and a confused recollection about the richness of their decorations. They generally remember that the Church of Brou is richly carved, that the inside of the Sainte Chapelle is painted and gilt, and that St. Peter's at Rome is big.

The same inaccuracy of the uneducated memory is strikingly obvious in reference to shipping. Ships are constantly drawn in such a way that they could not sail, and yet the







LANDSCAPE, WITH A COTTAGE ON A BANK, AND TREES OVERHANGING A RIVER.  
FROM THE ETCHING BY RUYSDAEL.

drawings are accepted without question. Just before writing this chapter I had seen a published print of shipping, where the shrouds were so placed that the yards could only be set at right angles to the keel.<sup>1</sup> In Ziem's picture of Venice at the Luxembourg, an American brig has mast hoops where no ship-builder ever placed them since the world began.

The education of the memory does not only concern the construction of natural and artificial things; it equally concerns those appearances of nature to which all things whatever are alike subjected. For example, suppose the case (which is not imaginary, as I have a real instance in view) of an artist who, for many years, has given especial attention to the study of sunshine. He has made so many studies of objects under sunshine that his mind has become perfectly familiar with the effects of it in regard to color, to the relief of objects, and to cast shadows. His knowledge of sunshine is a permanent possession of his mind, as ready to hand on any occasion as a language to one who has thoroughly assimilated it. Now ob-

<sup>1</sup> The shrouds went straight from the summit of the topgallant masts to the bulwarks. Such an arrangement would be possible only on condition that the vessel was always to sail with a fair wind, as she was a square-rigged ship.

serve the difference between such an artist and one who has a very imperfect knowledge of sunshine. Suppose the two together on a fine summer's day in the south of France or in Italy; they have just time to make a hasty pencil sketch, and each of them writes upon his sketch the words "full southern sun. nine" as a memorandum. To the artist whose memory of sunshine has already been thoroughly educated, the words recall the southern light, such as it really is, so that it is almost as if he went back to the hour when the sketch was made; but to the other the words are little more than marks with a lead pencil. A memorandum of that kind only recalls what we already know, and it is not of the least use to make these drafts on the bank of the memory, unless there is already capital enough in it to honor them.<sup>1</sup> The full value of such capital

<sup>1</sup> With regard to the action of the memory in dealing with memoranda, the following piece of actual experience may be worth recording. A distinguished painter, now a Royal Academician, told me that he had never found it possible to paint things well from hasty memoranda unless he had carefully painted objects of the same kind, at one time or other, from nature; but that he could always paint with his full power from slight memoranda when this condition had previously been fulfilled. This was said with reference to landscape subjects.



may be estimated by the few who have been privileged to see Alma-Tadema paint the light of the Mediterranean within a stone's throw of the Regent's Park Canal.

It is even true that an artist who has a thorough knowledge of sunshine will paint it better, incomparably better, from memory, than an artist of inferior knowledge could paint it from nature itself. This is not advanced merely as a statement that is likely to be true; I have actual examples in view whilst making it, and quite literally "in view," as I happen to be writing in a room where there is an elaborate study from nature supposed to be in full sunshine, but where the sun does not shine at all; whilst in another picture, which was done in the studio, he *does* shine.

The ultimate object of the cultivation of the memory in landscape, is to be able to fix transient effects. At first the young landscape-painter painfully takes note of each particular effect in its details, but after some experience he makes the discovery that the same effects recur, though the forms of the clouds, etc., may be varied. Here, then, is another great help to memory. Instead of having to remember each effect individually, the painter remembers

the class to which it belongs, and notes only the variation in the special case. And as the effects often recur, he has many new opportunities of correcting old observations which, when thus frequently corrected and added to, become assimilated as knowledge. A landscape painter who really knows by heart about twenty of those effects which are most suitable for his own work, has an amply sufficient provision of that kind of artistic science. Many a successful landscape-painter has not known half so many, or else his knowledge was much more comprehensive than his art.



FOREST SCENE, WITH THREE WAYFARERS AND A DOG BESIDE A POOL.  
FROM THE ETCHING BY RUYSDAEL.

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## VI.

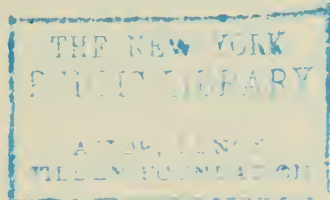
### GIFTS AND ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE.

THOSE who are fond of opposing natural talent to the discipline of education, are likely to make objections of the following kind to what has been advanced in the preceding chapter.

They will say that there is a distinction between the memory of the eye, which is the artist's special gift, and the scientific knowledge of appearances, which anybody may acquire by labor. The really gifted artist, they will urge, has no need of scientific observations, because he has only to look at an object or an effect to remember it; and since he can recall at will the image of what he has seen, he can paint from the image in his mind, just as another would paint from nature.

Certainly there is a distinction between painting from a clear recollection of the indi-

vidual object, and painting partly from that and partly from knowledge acquired beforehand. Certainly, also, there are artists who have peculiar gifts of memory, which enable them to seize what escapes others, such as the gift of the elder Leslie for seizing a transient expression in human beings, or that of Landseer for making a dog look human without losing the quality of doggishness; and the more a critic learns about art, the more he comes to be persuaded that these personal gifts, which are so much genius, can never be acquired by labor. No amount of toil would ever have enabled either Titian or Raphael to paint the expressions of ladies in drawing-rooms in any manner comparable to that of Leslie. Neither Vandyke nor Velasquez, though they could both paint dogs, would ever have had the slightest chance of rivalling Landseer, as a painter of subtle and various canine moods. It may be granted once and for all that special gifts are unapproachable, but at the same time we may observe that all men of genius who have greatly succeeded in the fine arts have possessed knowledge, or accumulated observation, as well as the genius which observes keenly for a moment, and that





FOREST SCENE, WITH TWO PEASANTS AND A DOG. FROM THE ETCHING BY RUYSDAEL.

without knowledge their genius would have been paralyzed.

What, after all, is the exact nature of an artist's knowledge; what is that which we specially call knowledge in an artist? It is the possession of certain general truths which are applicable to a special case. Suppose that two landscape-painters try to remember a birch-tree; one of the two men comes well provided with previous knowledge, the other has nothing to guide him but the observation of the moment. The first knows what is applicable to all trees whatever and to the art of representing them; he knows all about the rounding of trunks, the starting of branches from the trunk, the manner in which foliage catches the light, and the effect of shade on its appearance, how it is sometimes massed and sometimes scattered, and how the massing and the scattering of it are so governed by the laws of growth and gravitation that every leaf on a tree takes its place and share in the well-ordered beauty of the whole. Then, with reference to birches in particular, he knows already many things that are true of all birches; he knows all about the very peculiar bark, all about the growth and branching



of the tree and the remarkable nature of its foliage, with the great changes in its appearance, from the pale-green cloud that shows itself so early in the year to the scattered spots of gold that linger late. To see a birch is, therefore, for him at the same time a refreshing of old impressions and a rapid noting of individual peculiarities, such as the form and growth of this particular specimen. Meanwhile the artist without knowledge is dependent on his observation of the single specimen for all that he can carry away with regard to it, and that is not likely to be very much. This is the reason why the paintings of young artists are frequently at the same time laborious and incomplete. They try to imitate this or that specimen of a natural product, and attain a sort of fidelity, but not having in their minds a clear recollection of the qualities which are common to all healthy individuals in the species, they fall short of a full representation of those qualities. The artist who has learning and experience, on the other hand, holds more loosely to the particular specimen, but has his mind so charged with knowledge of a more comprehensive kind, that he expresses a greater sum of truth. We be-

lieve, then, the most comprehensive kind of artistic memory is impossible without accumulated knowledge. We have never known a single example of an artist, however gifted, who could draw really well from memory without having previously studied; but we have known several instances of men whose imagination was active, and whose works were defective because they relied upon it too much. A very conspicuous recent example was Gustave Doré. His imagination was fertile enough, but as he never had the patience to submit to discipline and acquire the knowledge that so large a productivity needed, the great mass of what he did, especially in painting, is marred by visible insufficiency, so that his early illustrations to Balzac's "*Contes Drôlatiques*," remain to this day his most satisfactory performance.<sup>1</sup> The want of knowledge is also evident in the less ambitious art of Richard Doyle, where the recollection of individual figures could not supply its place. In artists of more serious rank than these, the

<sup>1</sup> Being on a small scale, and frankly grotesque, the woodcuts in the "*Contes Drôlatiques*" enable us to enjoy the inventive genius of the artist, without being troubled by any reflections about inadequate studies.

rule holds good that they only remember or imagine clearly what they have studied diligently; and this accounts for the otherwise inexplicable fact that in the same picture you will sometimes find human beings represented with great power, and rocks painted without any attention either to their structure, their color, or natural decoration with moss and lichen; and yet rocks are far easier to paint truly and completely than human beings.

There is the less need to insist upon the necessity for previous knowledge, that we are all familiar with the failure of amateurs for the want of it. There is no reason to suppose that the natural gifts of the artist are less common amongst amateur than professional workers. In many cases the amateur must have the gift of memory, but from the insufficiency of his accumulated knowledge he retains images of insufficient distinctness.


The memory of an artist is distinguished from that of other people chiefly by this, that as he alone has really the knowledge of appearances, he is the only person who is able to call up images before the mind's eye which are distinct enough, and permanent enough, to be painted.



## VII.

### THE MECHANICAL AND SCIENTIFIC IMAGINATION.

ALTHOUGH the subject of this work is Imagination as it acts in one of the fine arts, it may be well to consider in this place what is the action of the same faculty in mechanical invention and scientific investigation or exposition, and to inquire if it really is the same faculty. No competent thinker would deny that mechanical inventors and men of science have imagination, but instead of admitting this without thinking about it, I will ask the reader to consider with me two particular instances. We shall then be able to observe at leisure how the imagination operates in matters quite outside of the fine arts, and we shall be better prepared to appreciate its action within their borders, or to distinguish between the scientific and the artistic imagination if such a distinction is necessary.

Of all the ingenious mechanical contrivances that I have ever examined minutely enough to understand them I do not remember any that have required more imagination than a card-making machine invented in Rochdale about forty years ago. A "card," as manufacturers use the word, means a thick piece of leather, or of some substitute for leather, in which are inserted innumerable pieces of wire that stand up like the bristles in a brush. It is mounted on a cylinder and used for "carding," wool or cotton by separating and cleaning the fibres. "Cards" are an old invention, and they used to be made by hand. To make them it was necessary to pierce two little holes, to take a piece of wire, cut it to a certain length, bend it into this shape , insert the points in the holes, drive the wire home till the angles touched the leather and then give the two upright pieces of wire a bend to make them stay in their place. All this had to be repeated thousands of times to make a "card," and it was a very dull, monotonous kind of work. An ingenious, imaginative man in Rochdale thought it might be possible to contrive a machine that would perform all these operations with infallible exactness. It is wonderful

that such an idea could enter a man's head, and it must have been a very imaginative head. For only just consider what the machine had to do. It had to pierce the two little holes, but that is nothing; it had to cut a bit of wire of a certain length from a coil, to handle that loose bit of wire as a man would handle it, bending it to two right angles; then it had to carry the bent bit to the holes in the leather, insert the two points exactly in the holes, drive the wire home, and bend it to a second angle behind the leather. Well, the machine does all this, and does it so fast that when it is really at work no human eye can see what it is doing; to see its work you must disconnect it from the steam-engine and let a man turn the wheel deliberately.

Now, the man who invented this must have had a powerful imagination, which probably operated in this way. He may have seen images in his mind of something half-human yet made of steel and brass, that was doing automatically the work of a human card-maker; or he may, in his long solitary musings, have seen a man and a machine working together, the machine doing gradually more and more of the man's work, till finally the man vanished

like a ghost and left the machine working completely and effectually in his place. Evidently the gifted seeker exercised not only imagination, not only the faculty of seeing images in the mind, but imaginative *invention*, or the power of seeing that which has not yet been realized. Familiar with machines already, familiar with the action of men in doing that which he wanted his machine to do, the inventor passed from the existent to the non-existent by a mental process so like that of the creative artist, that one is tempted to ask if the two kinds of invention are not essentially the same.

I reserve the answer for the next chapter, having still to consider how the imagination may operate in scientific exposition, which lies outside of practical inventions.

Some readers will remember Professor Clifford's lecture on "Atoms," in which he began by describing a certain structure, which he had never seen in a realized form, to explain the properties of an atom which he had never seen either. The structure was composed as follows : There were metal bells answering to different notes, and all "fastened to a set of elastic stalks, which sprang out of a certain centre to which they were attached." The bells were

held in such a way that they could spin round upon the points to which they were fastened. "And then the centre to which these elastic stalks are fastened or suspended you may imagine as able to move in all manner of directions; and that the whole structure — made up of these bells, and stalks, and centre — is able to spin round any axis whatever. We must also suppose that there is surrounding this structure a certain framework. We will suppose the framework to be made of some elastic material, so that it is able to be pressed to a certain extent. Suppose that framework is made of whalebone, if you like."

Professor Clifford went on to explain that although a structure of this kind is not an atom, it is convenient to have it in the mind as an illustration of the qualities of an atom, such as certain capabilities of vibration, certain motions of parts, and the capability of spinning round about any axis. The whalebone framework was intended to show that atoms cannot be put closer together than a certain degree of neighborhood; as if there were several of the imaginary things in the same room, the whalebone framework belonging to each would prevent contact, and by its elasticity have a

tendency to repel every other structure of the same kind.

This is quite one of the best examples I am able to recollect of imagination in the service of scientific instruction. It is evident that Clifford *saw* the elaborate structure of bells, centres, elastic stalks, and whalebone defences, just as plainly in his mind's eye as if it had been before him in the room. It is a seeing of images as in memory, yet it is not only memory, as no such things had ever been constructed. It is imaginative invention.

In the biography of Clifford, by Mr. F. Pollock, the biographer says that he once had perplexities about Ivory's theorem concerning the attraction of an ellipsoid, and that he consulted Clifford on the matter. "Being out for a walk with Clifford, I opened my perplexities to him; I think I can recall the very spot. What he said I do not remember in detail, which is not surprising, as I have had no occasion to remember anything about Ivory's theorem these twelve years. But I know that as he spoke *he appeared, not to be working out a question, but simply telling what he saw.* Without any diagram or symbolic aid he described the geometrical conditions on which

the solution depended, *and they seemed to stand out visibly in space.* There were no longer consequences to be deduced, but real and evident facts *which only required to be seen."*

Surely this is an accurate description of the image-making faculty, the power of seeing things as images in the mind. And now let us inquire what it is that separates this kind of imagination from that of artists.



## VIII.

### IMAGES EVOKED BY FEELING.

THE mechanical inventor and the imaginative man of science have much in common with the artist, but not all. They have evidently the power of seeing their conceptions as clear images, but the images are not evoked by any emotion except the practical desire for efficiency, or the intellectual desire for a more perfect apprehension of truth. Now, although it is quite possible that a man with the practical or the intellectual imagination might write verses or take to painting, he would never, I believe, be recognized as an imaginative poet or painter. The clearer the evidence of truthfulness in his work, the more he would be looked upon as a simple copyist of nature.

The artistic imagination has this special peculiarity, that the images are always evoked by feeling, and that the degree of



their reality is always determined for them by an emotion which might be said to come from the heart if there were not some reason to suppose that it comes rather from a special sensibility.

In any case it always *seems* to come from the heart, though there are good reasons for believing that a highly accomplished artist works in a state of *secondary* emotion, that is, a half-feigned or half-remembered emotion, rather than in a state of real immediate emotion. One reason for believing this is, that in a state of real emotion the artist would hardly be able to attend to the necessary technical conditions of his craft. The poet would hardly be able to make beautiful verses, or the painter to lay his color with the most perfect skill. A man whose house had just been burnt down, and his children suffocated in their beds, would certainly not be able to make the best of the subject in an elegy. He would probably not even be able to narrate the event in a letter. I remember a case in point. Not long after the Indian mutiny, I was in a railway carriage, when a comfortable-looking gentleman expressed a hope that the evil deeds of the rebels had been exaggerated. A silent man in a corner of the

carriage here interposed: "They tied me to a tree, and they killed my wife, my faithful servants, and my children, before my eyes." He used no eloquence, no poetry, but stated the facts in this bald way, and then lapsed again into silence. The emotion was too real to permit the developments of art.<sup>1</sup>

This brings us to a most important conclusion which enhances still more the great value of imagination in the fine arts. Not only are the images seen by the imaginative artist called up by emotion, but *the emotion itself is imaginative*. By the power of his imagination the artist enters into a state of emotion, and yet, at the same time, this emotion, which is only half real, leaves him sufficient mental liberty to attend to all the technical details of his work as a versifier or painter. When a poet seems most deeply moved, he has still leisure enough to choose effective syllables and sonorous rhymes, as an actress, in the storm of simulated passion, assumes those attitudes which display her person to advantage.

<sup>1</sup> As an example of the *total* want of imagination, I may add that the comfortable-looking gentleman, by way of being consolatory, said, "Oh, you're young yet; you'll marry again, very likely, and have another family!"

When the artist's feelings are of an imaginative character they leave him at liberty to have consideration for the feelings of others. The poet is not carried away by his own Pegasus, but thinks of his reader, and is careful not to weary or overpower him. I will select an example, and cannot think of a better than the mission of Iris just at the close of the Fourth Book of the *Æneid*. Many readers will remember how in the course of that book we are made to sympathize so much with the unhappy Dido that the long account of her passionate grief and rage on the departure of *Æneas* becomes at length oppressive. If the poetry were not so powerful we should say there was too much of the subject ; as it is, we are carried along to the end, and are made spectators of an agony that tries us by its prolongation. By the time that Virgil had arrived at those verses where the dying queen raises herself three times on her elbow, falling back each time upon her couch, he knew that the reader would want her to be put out of her misery, as nothing can be more trying to the spectator than a suicide not quite effectually accomplished. A vulgar poet might have perceived this also, and brought, perhaps, the repulsive image of

Death to the heroine's relief. Virgil, having much delicacy of taste, a delicacy of which he has given many other proofs, delivers the victim without introducing any dreadful personage whatever, and consoles us by a spectacle of sovereign pity and immortal grace. He brings a beautiful messenger from Olympus. Juno has taken pity upon the "longum dolorem," and the "difficiles obitus" of Dido, and sends Iris to effect her deliverance by cutting one hair from her head and carrying it to Pluto. Iris does this gently, and with kind words:—

"Hunc ego Diti  
Sacrum jussa fero, teque isto corpore solvo."

The two concluding verses bring us to perfect repose:—

"Sic ait, et dextra crinem secat; omnis et una  
Dilapsus calor, atque in ventos vita recessit."

The entire passage narrating the mission of Iris, from the line beginning "Tum Juno omnipotens" to those just quoted, is an example of imagination suggested by feeling and employed both to awaken and to satisfy the feelings of the reader. The connection between visible beauty and the moral beauty of mercy,

though in itself imaginary, is suggested to the mind in order to satisfy an ideal desire for harmony between appearances and realities. Even in so brief a narrative two verses are given to color and glitter, to the saffron-colored wings of Iris, dewy, and drawing a thousand various tints from the sun. Here the poetic imagination works in its own way, having nothing like utility in view as when a man invents ingenious machinery, nor yet the explanation of what is believed to be a fact, as when a professor tries to make us understand the properties of atoms and molecules, but the one object of the poet is to play upon his reader's feelings. First he makes him suffer, and then he relieves the suffering. Here the imagination of the poet deals with two opposite kinds of feeling by a contrast planned beforehand on the principle that "sweet is pleasure after pain." Exactly the same art is employed in the description of the infernal regions in the Sixth Book. After having been saddened by the spectacle of suffering, Æneas is relieved, and the reader with him, by coming to the

'locos lætos et amœna vireta  
Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatus."

It may be remarked, in passing, that Virgil avoids here the one great artistic error of Dante, who tortures our feelings almost without respite through more than thirty cantos, and puts his more agreeable imaginings into another poem.

## IX.

### THE ALTERATION IN IMAGES PRODUCED BY FEELING.

SUPPOSE the cases of two painters, both of them working from memory, that is, painting from images in the mind. One of them shall have a clear memory but be without feeling; the other shall have the most lively and sensitive feeling, like a poet (which, indeed, a sensitive painter really is). The first will see impartially and therefore remember and paint with impartial truth, the other will not remember in this way because the images in his mind will have undergone a peculiar transformation in consequence of the activity of his feeling.

If this transformation did not take place, a critic would never be able to say that one artist had more feeling than another, as the feeling of the artist would not be visible in his work.



Those who know nothing about art and to whom its language conveys no meaning, sometimes indulge their wit at the expense of the criticism which takes feeling into consideration, and express their contempt for the word as a canting term of the prevalent æstheticism. It is, however, as certain as anything can be which is outside the region of the exact sciences, that although the power of art may be due in a great degree to knowledge, so that ignorant painting is always really weak painting, however bold and pretentious, the charm of art, on which its success depends, is not due to knowledge but to feeling. The evidence in support of this statement is overwhelming. All those works of art that we dwell upon with ever renewed pleasure attract us by the delicacy, the tenderness, or the force of those emotions which the artist imaginatively felt when he was producing them; and it is one of the most wonderful yet undeniable powers of painting, and of all the graphic arts, that the emotions of the artist are communicated to all spectators who have naturally a sensitiveness like his own.<sup>1</sup> Our

<sup>1</sup> The rule is that they are communicated, but there are exceptions. An artist who has a passionate love of truth may paint so that his work, from its too equal veracity, may seem passion-

admiration may be excited by sheer manual ability or by the splendor of a picture as a show of color and form, but to make us love his work an artist must win our sympathy with his feeling. Let him once do that, and we shall overlook a hundred imperfections.

It is one of the most interesting investigations in art-criticism to find out by what means the feeling of a painter reaches us. In our loose, figurative way of speaking, we talk almost as if the painter had words at his command like a poet, and could tell us what he loved, as young Byron expressed his boyish affection for "dark Loch na Garr." But the painter has really no resource except a choice of materials and qualities in nature, and the alteration of what he has chosen. It is amazing that feeling can be expressed by such limited means as selection and alteration, but so it is. Modern science, in providing us with an art — photography — which is perfectly destitute of feeling, has given us a possibility of comparison, though the comparison does not extend to color. Photography

less, and an artist whose emotions are profound may sometimes be so little in unison with the shallower feelings of less serious or less imaginative people that they may feel more disposed to laugh at him than to admire him.

is a purely scientific or unfeeling art, which drawing can only exceptionally become in the hands of a purely scientific or unfeeling artist. If the reader could see a photograph of a natural landscape, and then a sketch or picture of the same landscape by a sensitive artist, he would observe a thousand changes suggested by the artist's dislike to some parts of his materials and his affection for others. He would observe in the representation of those things which he had not rejected a certain partiality for some qualities and neglect of others, which are the signs of artistic feeling. An artist cannot even paint the bough of a leafless tree without letting us know whether he prefers curves or angles; and if he likes curves better, we shall soon see what is his favorite quality in curves. If he paints a wood with many different species of trees, we shall see which is his favorite species merely by his way of painting it. His affection, too, may itself be of one quality or another: it may be a robust affection, accepting the rude natures of things; or it may be a delicate, idealizing affection, that attaches itself only to a sort of spiritualized essence. Nobody would suppose that Ruysdael loved oaks as Corot loved a birch; or that the rustic affection of Constable

for an elm was like the sentiment of delicate admiration that led Raphael to attenuate still further the tenuity of a young ash. There is an infinite variety in our sentiments, even when we love the same thing; and this is what gives such perennial freshness to art.

A young English landscape-painter wrote to a landscape-painter of the ripest experience to the effect that he felt strongly tempted to live in a certain part of England; but that as it had long been a regular haunt of artists, he feared the material there had become excessively hackneyed, and must have lost all novelty. The answer he received has a direct bearing on our present subject. The elder artist, who himself constantly painted very well-known places, wrote in reply that the apprehensions of his young friend were groundless; because his own personal feeling, if he allowed it full play, would give complete novelty to his subjects. The profound truth of this is illustrated every year by artists who make Wales, Scotland, Switzerland, and even Venice, new for us. The stronger the personal quality in the artist, the more will the images in his mind be altered by his own feeling.

The fine arts are not an isolated manifesta-

tion of human genius ; and it is impossible to understand them without reference to that general human nature which they reflect. In everything we see old subjects made fresh and new by the entirely unexpected treatment they receive from new men. The three words — “ Monarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy ” — which have been mentioned in connection with the images they evoke, have meanings continually undergoing modification in consequence of new personal conceptions. What is still more remarkable is that the history of past ages, whose account seems closed with the death of all those who belonged to them, is constantly presented to us in new aspects by the selecting imagination of new historians.<sup>1</sup>

The changes produced by imagination may be brought under one uniform law. Every imaginative mind is so constituted that certain qualities in men or things attract its attention, as being either pleasing or repugnant. These qualities then assume an excessive importance,

<sup>1</sup> I had hardly written the above when I came upon the following passage in a speech on books and reading by Mr. James Russell Lowell: “ And in what, I pray, are those we gravely call historical characters, of which each new historian strains his neck to get a new and different view, in any sense more real than the personages of fiction ? ”

disproportionate for other minds, but seeming right to the individual imagination. If the imaginative person is a writer or a painter, his work will be full of his feeling about those qualities; and it will contain but slight reference, if any, to other qualities, equally existent in reality but having no relation to the individual mind. This, I believe, is a fair statement of the general law. It follows that when images are evoked by feeling they cannot be images of complete realities, but only of some qualities appertaining to realities; and of those qualities only with which the single imaginative mind is in attractive or repellent relation. The application of this law to the work of imaginative landscape-painters will be our present study.

## X.

### UNITY AS A RESULT OF IMAGINATION.

IT is lucky for the fine arts, and, I believe, a purely accidental consequence of the imaginative way of conceiving or remembering what is visible, that when the realities of the material world have passed through the alembic of the imagination they gain as much in unity as they lose in minuteness of detail. That this result is in a certain sense accidental seems to be proved by the fact that it is due quite as much to weakness of memory as to strength of invention. An artist whose memory had *no* failures would retain everything so perfectly that he would always be painting from nature, and he would lose the advantage of that natural selection and omission which the unequal action of the memory makes involuntary. This is one of those curious but very frequent cases in which a defect turns out to be really an

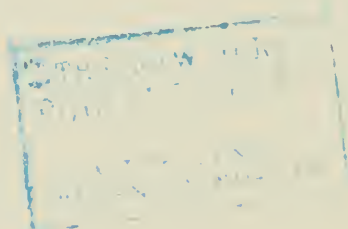


advantage. The unity that charms us in a landscape by Gainsborough or David Cox, and which contributed so powerfully to build up the astonishingly high reputation of Corot, is due in great part to the same natural infirmity of the memory that makes it so difficult for the schoolboy to retain details that do not interest him. In art, however, this infirmity would be of no practical value if it were not subordinate to feeling. The sentiment of the artist makes certain things interesting and important to him, and as his sentiment governs the action of his memory, he remembers only what is necessary. No one who has not studied the subject with close attention can fully realize the great practical advantage which the imaginative artist derives from his habit of involuntary omission. It is not only useful to him in forgetting *things* which would uselessly intrude, but it also enables him to pass over all those qualities in nature that would interfere with his special purpose. In this way it may be said to be essential to masterly execution and to style. Nothing, in the execution of the great masters, is more remarkable than their broad and simple manner of painting. How simply Titian painted,

and our own Gainsborough and Reynolds! How different their work is in this respect from that of many inferior artists! The reason is that they never painted without imagination, and therefore were delivered from the tyranny of those qualities in nature that importune the painter who observes and does not imagine. The same quality of simplification is conspicuous in the whole of Girtin's work, and in that of David Cox. To my mind there is something profoundly satisfactory in the independence with which Girtin left unfurnished spaces in his drawings. The unimaginative inventors of recipes for composition would have told him to put groups of figures or cattle in his unfurnished spaces, and to cut his quiet lines with buildings, but he never would put a figure or a building where his own imaginative sentiment did not feel the need. There are many drawings by David Cox which depend on the simplicity in the use of material for their lasting effect upon the mind. "The Windmill" that Mr. Brandard engraved for us is a case in point. The immediate foreground is, in itself, dull; the bit of road in the left-hand corner is insignificant, and the long band of heather is neither interesting nor



HOLY FAMILY. SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.



clearly made out. Beyond this lies a broad space of shade containing nothing that is attractive. The sky is so extremely quiet that the subtle arrangement of its cloud-forms (if they can be called forms) must escape the attention of every one except an experienced artist or critic. The house is not very picturesque, and certainly has no pretension to beauty, nor is it easily explicable how such disproportionately large dormer-windows co-exist with the very low front which is all there is room for under them. The horse and cart, with the driver, seem commonplace, and show no special invention; the trees are stunted; the rising ground so low as to have none of the interest of hills. All these criticisms are just, but they are beside the mark. The one merit of the drawing is the perfect unity of impression that it conveys. Nothing in the whole composition is sufficiently interesting to set up a conflict with the windmill. Substitute, mentally, a pretty piece of architecture for the cottage, and the interest would be too much carried to the right. Observe how the little interest there is diminishes gradually like a dying cadence in music, the dormer-windows are nearest the mill, then you have the chim-

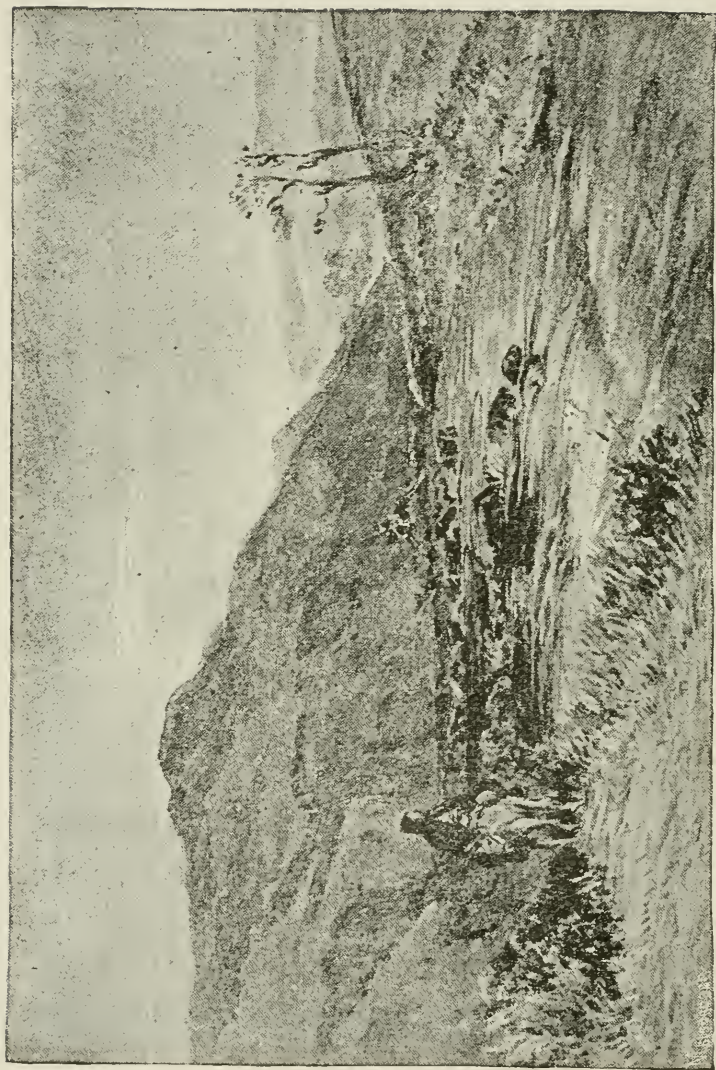


ney, and after that nothing but a low roof. The only tree that shows some slight elaboration is near the centre of the drawing, that behind the cottage to the right is a mere blot. Never was composition less obtrusive, and yet you have it everywhere. The windmill is a sort of triangle with a steep side to the left, and a more sloping side to the right. A similar diminution to the right is repeated in the cottage and figures. A broadly curved sweep in the mass of darker cloud is repeated in a steeper curve by the birds. Lastly, whatever arrangements of minor material may have seemed advisable, the artist has not for one moment forgotten that the subject of his drawing was the windmill, which is as predominant and as important as it can be.

This simplicity of treatment is of the kind that belongs especially to Imagination. Its opposite is to be found in those numerous compositions in which the one dread of the artist is that some part of his work may be condemned as uninteresting. To escape from this criticism he fills it from end to end with heterogeneous matter, and amuses the vulgar spectator by putting the materials of half a dozen pictures that might separately have







GLENDIARG. CATTERTON.

been satisfactory into one inconsistent accumulation.

The reader may perhaps ask at this point where is the feeling that has been mentioned as distinguishing artistic from scientific or mechanical imagination? The answer is that feeling is shown here by the artist's quiet and happy contentment with the sources of interest that the rustic scene really afforded. The reader may examine the work as closely as he likes; he will not find even the very slightest intrusion of any foreign element, neither does the artist vainly attempt to ennoble the simple materials before him by giving them a grandeur not their own. A common draughtsman would not hesitate to introduce a lady and gentleman on horseback into such a scene, and would think their presence an improvement on the vacant bit of road in the corner.

A very perfect example of the simplicity and unity which belong to those imaginative compositions that are suggested by feeling is Cattermole's drawing of *Glendcarg*, engraved by Willmore as an illustration to Scott's "Monastery," and mentioned long ago with approbation in the first volume of "Modern Painters." Cattermole did not quite strictly

adhere to Scott's description, having too clear an imaginative conception of his own to follow that of another, but Scott's word-picture has the same quality of unity produced by feeling.

"A November mist overspread the little valley, up which slowly but steadily rode the monk Eustace. He was not insensible to the feeling of melancholy inspired by the scene and by the season. The stream seemed to murmur with a deep and oppressed note, as if bewailing the departure of autumn. Among the scattered copses which here and there fringed its banks, the oak-trees only retained that pallid green that precedes their russet hue. The leaves of the willows were most of them stripped from the branches, lay rustling at each breath and disturbed by every step of the mule; while the foliage of other trees, totally withered, kept still precarious possession of the boughs, waiting the first wind to scatter them."

Cattermole held very loosely to this description. His monk is riding down the valley instead of up it, as we know by the flowing of the water; and he gives us neither the mist of November, nor the scattered oak copses, nor the willows. His drawing, therefore, must be taken simply on its own merits as an original conception of border landscape. A stony stream, rather broad and very rapid, flows past the foot of a low, bare, and steep hill, behind

which the sun has set, leaving still just enough light to fill three or four faint streaks of level cloud. The monk has been riding on a narrow path between this hill and the water, and the knight is galloping after him at the hill's foot. The only trees are two poor trunks, that look like alder, on the bare shore to the right in the middle distance, and two copse-bushes far away. The bareness of the hill is complete, and evidently intentional as an important element in the dreary, wild, and thoroughly northern character of the scene. The water is monotonous in its swift flowing; it does not rest in a calm pool, to flow on again when it has rested.

The subject is exactly one of those that the vulgar artist would consider uninteresting. The bare hill would seem to him to require ornament of some sort; and he would either diversify it with roads, or clothe its nakedness with trees, or sublimize into a mountain. The poverty of the opposite shore would seem to call for a cottage or a fisherman. He would not like the general stony character of the stream, but would group the scattered stones together picturesquely on one side. By all these improvements he might, perhaps, succeed

in making his work more salable ; but he would effectually destroy that simple unity of character which in Cattermole's drawing resulted from feeling and imagination.

Rembrandt's *Landscape with figures of Tobias and the Angel* is a good instance of the simplicity and unity which result from a purely imaginative conception. Nothing could be simpler than the materials ; the rising ground to the left is rough and broken to convey the idea that the journey of young Tobias has not been quite easy hitherto ; and for the same reason he is walking on rough ground ; the sky, the wood, and the river are gloomy, to impress us with a sense of awe, but there is a light in the sky behind the trees which at the same time gives a centre to the subject, and makes us feel that although the way may be rough and the weather gloomy, the traveller is not abandoned either to darkness or despair. The introduction of the angel with wings is rather opposed to the text, as Tobias saw nothing to indicate the angelic rank, but it is almost necessary as a painter's license.



## XI.

### HOW THE IMAGINATION DEALS WITH DEFINITE LINES AND PROPORTIONS.

**I**F one were suddenly asked what is the greatest need of the Imagination, he would probably answer either "abundance of materials" or else "liberty."

A great abundance of material to select from is indeed evidently necessary; but not less necessary is great liberty in the employment of it. This need for liberty has been felt by the poets to such a degree that they have seldom been willing even to let themselves be bound by the laws of Nature; and when they have had small belief, or no belief, in the supernatural, they have assumed a poetical belief in it merely for its extreme convenience. Nor is there any sign that this tendency is diminishing as we become more scientific. On the contrary, the distinction between poetry and what is not poetry is more and more clearly seen to

be the distinction between imaginative and unimaginative literature. The tendency is more and more to leave to poetry the utmost freedom in the fields of both the natural and the supernatural; and our most recent bards are accustomed to feign what are called superstitious beliefs even more frequently than their immediate predecessors. There is less of the supernatural in Scott and Byron than in Rossetti.

It is, however, incomparably easier to deal with realities imaginatively in poetry than in painting, since in poetry the desired liberty may be aided by an intentional vagueness of expression; whereas in painting the possibility of vagueness is much more limited, and there are many things which the painter *must* express with some degree of definition. There are things, too, which he must not only define, but represent in certain fixed proportions, on pain of appearing ignorant. It is impossible for the most imaginative artist to enjoy any freedom in painting a Doric column. We should say, in looking at the picture, that the column was more or less pure in type; and if it were not carefully done, we should say that the drawing was inaccurate. In a good, au-



thentic Doric column, the outline, as every student knows, is not a straight line, but a very delicate convex curve. If a painter were to omit the curve, he would give the column a stiffness that it has not in reality; but if he drew the curve at all visibly he would probably exaggerate it. In either case there would be very little room for imagination. If he curved the outline more on one side than the other, we should all declare that he could not draw; and nobody would listen to any demand for such liberty on the ground of imaginative requirements.

Architecture has been so often introduced into landscape, and was an element of such importance in the landscapes of Turner and Claude, that I am not going out of my way in taking architectural drawing as a conveniently positive and measurable test of the action of the imagination in dealing with things of a definite shape.

It is to be observed, first, that in all sketches done in the heat of imagination, architectural forms, however rigid and severe, are dealt with as freely as anything else. What has been just said about the painter and the Doric column referred to pictures only. In sketches

the most famous painters work in a manner which, to the unintelligent, must appear ignorant and careless ; but which in reality is nothing more than the free play of mind upon the subject.

This is also the case even with architects. One of the most interesting and beautiful architectural works ever published — Baron de Geymüller's work on the early projects for St. Peter's at Rome — contains *fac-similes* of many sketches by Bramante and others, which were projects set down on paper whilst the ideas were still fresh in the brain and the imagination in full activity. In all these sketches, though the subjects are the rigid forms of Renaissance architecture, the hand is as little restrained, and the drawing as remote from strict accuracy, as that of a landscape painter occupied in sketching a tree.

This by way of parenthesis, as our present concern is with painters only. I allude to architects because they are of necessity most strict and accurate men ; and yet, as we see, their accuracy gives way before Imagination. The architect will become accurate again when the actual work of invention is completed, and he has only to elaborate its results.



WOMAN PLAYING CYMBALS. FROM THE ETCHING BY TURNER.



I see no great difference between the imagination of a painter when he deals with architecture and that of the architect himself, supposing the latter to be, as he ought always to be, an artist. At the moment of invention the painter will sketch loosely, even (as it may seem) wildly ; but when he works out his idea in a finished picture, he will become accurate in exact proportion to the degree of finish he aims at.

Nothing is more likely to deceive an unthinking critic than the sort of finish given to buildings in Claude's pictures. It is so quietly methodical — the temper of the workman seems so entirely destitute of passion — that one can hardly credit him with imagination. For example, in the familiar *Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, it would be difficult for any one who thought of the picture only, without recollecting Claude's sketches, to believe that any imagination had gone to the drawing of the buildings, which are ruled with a mechanical carefulness. Look at the square-cut stones in the corner, under the arch, and the Corinthian column. See how careful the artist has been about the mason's work, laying it stone by stone, and not forgetting the iron

clamps that hold the stones together. Observe the steps by which the Queen and her followers are descending, with what almost Philistine accuracy the lines of the perspective are ruled. They would, indeed, have been perfectly intolerable in a picture without the groups of figures that interrupt them. In like manner, the hard, mechanical drawing of the palace, with the portico, makes us long for the relief which is supplied just in the right place by the beautiful group of trees. Mr. Murray's engraving well translates the calm manner of Claude, but to appreciate it fully one must see not only how the architecture is drawn, but how it is *painted*—with what workmanlike regularity the paint is applied to one stone after another, there being exactly the same degree of imperceptible excitement in every case. *Some* degree of excitement is necessary to the production of every picture.

This calmness, this deliberate care, in the treatment of architecture is, I believe, common to all the pictures of Claude, as it is certainly common to all those which I have seen. When, however, we turn to his etchings, we find a touch decidedly more picturesque and a pleasure in the treatment of more or less broken line,



even in classical architecture. Thus, the columns and architrave to the left in the *Campo Vaccino* are treated with an evident desire to avoid hardness, and so are the massive fluted columns with the rich Corinthian capitals, that support a fragmentary architrave in the *Troupeau en Marche par un Temps d'Orage*. In the famous *Sunrise* plate the Roman triumphal arch to the left is almost as picturesque in its decay as it would be in a modern water-color. In *La Danse au Bord de l'Eau* there is a small water-mill with a tower, and Claude is as careful about the picturesque quality of these buildings as Brunet-Debaines might be. He avoids outline altogether, relieving the tower against the wood, and the cottage against the tower, by the simple opposition of light and dark, whilst he carefully shows in these white silhouettes that the masonry is somewhat touched by Time, and that it is not vertical. All this seems to indicate a much more picturesque imagination than we should guess at from the *Queen of Sheba*.

But it is when we come to Claude's sketches that we see how picturesque his imagination really was. It was not chilled or arrested by severity in buildings, but dealt with easily and



naturally, on principles that will have to be elucidated shortly with reference to modern sketching of non-ruinous architecture.

The probability seems to be that the love of careful and mechanical architectural drawing in finished pictures had come to Claude from Raphael, as Raphael himself had got it from the early Italian painters directly through Perugino.<sup>1</sup> It will scarcely be a digression to give some thought to the Raphaelesque formality in this place, on account of its great influence. There is a very good example of it in a picture called the *Madonna Ansidei*, recently added to our National Gallery. The Virgin is seated on a throne raised on a plinth, to which access is given by two steps that look very like a large box and a smaller one. The plinth is adorned with a Greek fret and panelled in front; the box-like steps are also panelled. Above the throne is a canopy, and beyond it a lofty round arch.

All this mechanical part of the picture is arranged as symmetrically as a two-handled vase. Nor is this the only known form of the same subject. In the *Virgin with the Baldacchino* (Pitti) the arrangement of throne and arch is

<sup>1</sup> This is not a guess; there is clear evidence.



LE DESSINATEUR. FROM THE ETCHING BY CLAUDE.

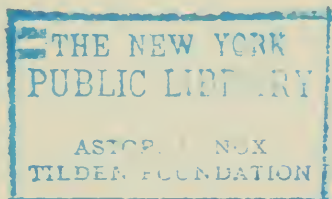


the same, except that the arch is filled by an apse instead of having an open view, and in the Ripalda *Holy Family* the arch is a tympanum above the picture and separated from it by a frieze. In the three pictures the mechanical drawing is equally perfect. There exists, however, a sketch of the motive common to these pictures, though with other figures, and in the sketch the throne and plinth, with the two box-like steps, are drawn quite as lightly and freely as the architecture in Claude's pen-sketches, — nay, the instinctive desire to *avoid* excessive symmetry which characterizes most sketches has its satisfaction in the simple omission of one half the high back of the throne, whilst the arch is indicated by three loose curved lines on one side only. This is one instance out of many. In a finished picture by Raphael the mechanical work is always sure to be done mechanically, but whilst he is actually composing and imagining, it is as loose and free as a rapid etching of Rembrandt. The mechanical work in the pictures may have been done by another hand, but there are drawings by Raphael (as distinguished from sketches of ideas), in which the perspective is carefully made out with a ruler. There is evidence, too, that Raphael

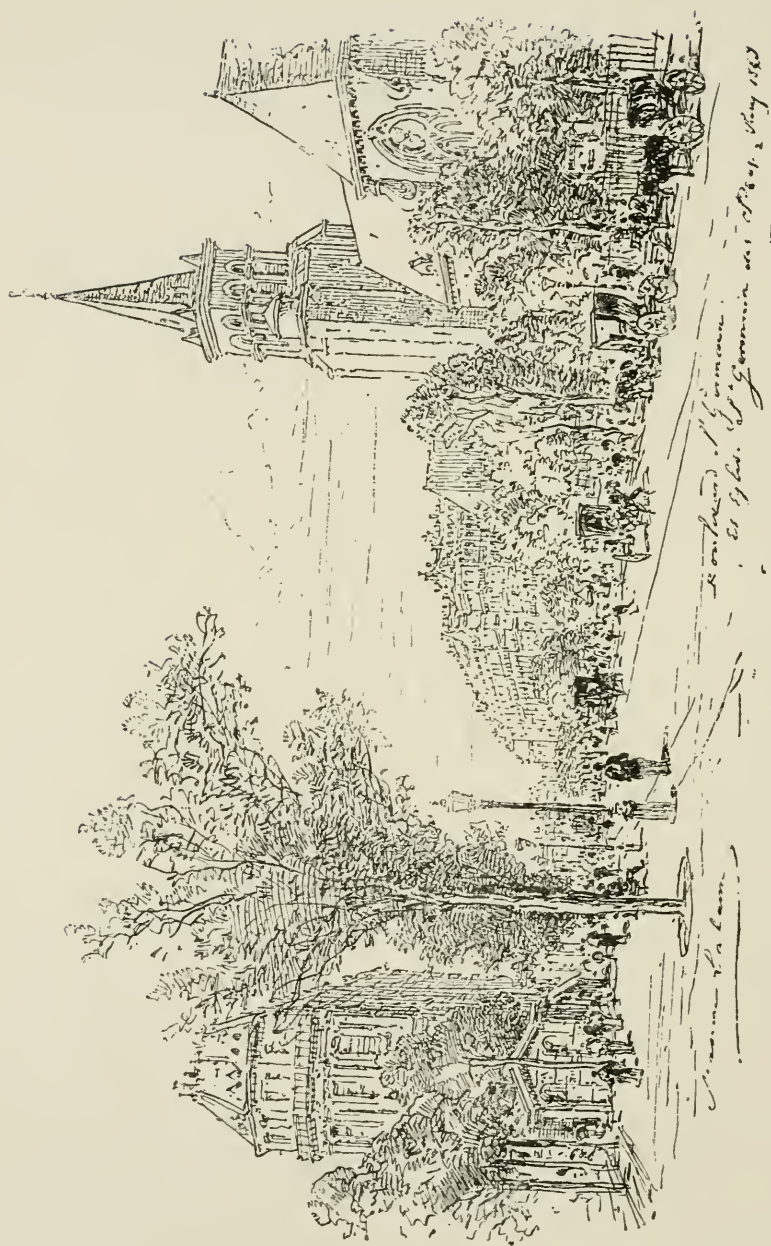
had rather a mechanical turn of mind. As an architect he was familiar with rigid forms and exact measurements, and whenever any bit of mechanism came in his way, he took pleasure in giving it his attention. One of the most interesting instances is a sort of foretold or hint of the future paddle-wheels that propel steamers. This is in the *Triumph of Galatea*, where a small paddle-wheel is drawn very carefully, though it is quite superfluous, as there are two strong dolphins to do the work.<sup>1</sup>

The mechanical perfection in the pictures of Raphael and Claude may have been partly due to the indirect influences of the burin. The classical school of engraving had developed a taste for severe lines in backgrounds, as it dealt far more easily with anything that could be ruled, or defined with a clear curve, than with the forms of natural landscape. In this way it is not improbable that the work of Marc Antonio, and others, in the backgrounds of figure-pictures, may have had an influence on landscape painting. They liked pavements,

<sup>1</sup> Narrow theorists sometimes place the artistic and mechanical intellects in opposition, as if they were irreconcilable; yet not only have we the case of Leonardo da Vinci, but in fact every architect of real imaginative power *must* unite the two intellects in his own person.







BOULEVARD ST. GERMAIN.



columns, and orders, with perhaps a glimpse of landscape in the distance. If we wonder at the ease with which Claude and Canaletti tolerated extremely stiff and artificial foregrounds made by masons, the explanation may be found in the classical school of engraving and in the use of a tool which is not a painter's tool — the burin.

The practice of etching, on the other hand, in our own day has impelled the graphic arts generally in another direction, which is well worth inquiring into, as it involves a most curious question about truth.

Suppose that an artist has to draw some pure and rigid piece of architecture, such as a new stone house of severe classical design (it does not signify whether it is a reality or only an architectural project), we all know that whatever very slight irregularities there may be in the edges of the stone, they will be invisible a few yards off, and that if the artist is far enough away to see the building as a whole, it will be represented for him by lines so pure that the ruled line of the professional architectural engraver is only just clear enough and accurate enough to represent them. But now comes an artist like Lalanne, for example, who

has to draw the well-finished masonry, and nothing can induce him to work with that degree of precision. We may be sure that the objection does not arise from indolence; it must come from an artistic motive of which the artist may or may not be conscious. It would be easy to say that Lalanne draws severe buildings loosely because such treatment is artistic, but *prenez garde!* have we not just seen that both Claude and Raphael tolerated clear lines in their finished work, and shall we go so far as to say that it was not artistic? If we said that, we ought to say the same of sculpture and of classical burin engraving. No; the hard, clear drawing in Raphael's backgrounds is artistic, since it goes well with the finish of his figures, but it has the serious defect of not stimulating the imagination of the spectator. I do not say that it is not the product of imagination in Raphael. In his own peculiar way he had a great deal of imagination; he imagined noble personages amidst noble surroundings, but his finished work does not greatly stimulate the imaginations of others.

If the reader will turn to one of Lalanne's etchings, or to one of his pen-sketches in

some modern city, such as Paris, he will see at once that his peculiar treatment of formal, highly finished modern buildings is much more the expression of a certain feeling experienced in a place than an attempt to imitate what might be seen by hard and careful looking. In order to spare the reader the trouble of a reference to my volume on "Paris," I have requested the publishers to reprint in this place Lalanne's sketch-view of the *Boulevard St. Germain*. It may be objected that this is only a sketch, and that Raphael himself sketched loosely; but the difference is, that Lalanne always works on the same principle, though, when he etches, the greater perfection of the etching process would make the work look more refined.

The first quality that strikes me in this sketch is that it immediately produces the impression of being on the Boulevard itself. Before I have had time to examine a single detail I am in Paris, close to the church of St. Germain, and feel an impulse to go and see some things and people I know in the neighborhood. This comes from the lively truth of aspect which has been seized upon by the artist. This sketch seems to contain many

details; but when I try to examine them I only find a suggestion which is generally the merest hint, my own intimate knowledge of the locality, and an easily stimulated imagination, doing the rest. Let us take one detail. The nearest tree does not grow as most trees grow, from the soil, thicker near the ground where the roots begin to spread; the fact being that we cannot see the beginning of the roots, as they are down below a circular grating. The reader will see this grating rapidly indicated by a line, and within it he will see three or four other lines converging towards the trunk. I know what Lalanne means by these hints. He means that the design of the grating radiates like the spokes of a wheel. Let us now pass to the block of houses on the left. Its general proportions are most truthful, and the details are effectually suggested to one who is familiar with Parisian houses; but not one of them is drawn with anything like the severity which in reality belongs to architecture of that kind. There is almost every truth in the sketch except that severity, and the absence of it may be excused in this way: So long as we look at a scene of this kind in the reality without effort, without close scrutiny, we do

not see much more clearly than in the sketch. Our impression is a confused impression of a multitude of details, and we do not perceive the severity of clear lines as we should if we looked at them steadily. I may add that the sketch gives an excellent idea of Paris in another way. There is not much effect, but we feel that we are in a place where there is a predominance of light tones.

A sketch of this kind is a collection of hints to awaken memory. The water-colors of Jules Jacquemart were done on the same principle of defining nothing, but giving as many hints as possible. There is no reason why oil-color should not be used in the same way, and, in fact, it is frequently so used by clever artists. The word "clever," it may be observed in passing, is more frequently applied to suggestive artists than to any others.

This kind of drawing is a consequence of practice with the etching-needle, an instrument that conveniently expresses knowledge in this way and suggests straight, complete things, by lines that are crooked and incomplete. This kind of drawing can never, therefore, be precisely true when rigid, highly finished architecture has to be drawn, yet it suggests

more numerous truths than the more perfect kind of drawing ever realizes. An architect's draughtsman would give the pilasters on the house-fronts accurately, but he would not convey either the truths that I have pointed out in Lalanne's sketch, or others that I pass in silence.

## XII.

### OF SPECIAL EXAGGERATIONS IN BUILDINGS.

THERE is another kind of deviation from strict truth more common in the works of Turner than in those of Lalanne. The French artist generally, though not always, is accurate in the proportions of parts, and is really a careful draughtsman with an appearance of ease and carelessness. Many a laborious drawing of street architecture, many a painfully wrought engraving, is much farther from the right proportions of masses than the slightest *croquis* of Lalanne. With Turner the case is different. I am far from wishing to impute any real carelessness to Turner. Great artists are seldom, if ever, careless, having always some purpose in view, though they may sometimes appear indifferent about the means. In the case of Turner, to be seriously interested in anything was to exaggerate the thing or



the quality that interested him. The mention of Paris and Lalanne reminds me of a very valuable example that I have taken note of elsewhere, but which may be alluded to again, because it shows so well how Turner's imagination acted. The reader remembers the picturesque semicircular projections over the piers of the Pont Neuf. Turner perceived at once that these were very characteristic and important features of the bridge, so he made them three times their real size<sup>1</sup> relatively to the arches, thereby giving the bridge a much heavier appearance than it has in the reality, but making it look a more remarkable and curious bridge, and more unlike other bridges, especially modern ones. Lalanne etched the Pont Neuf, and in his etching the bartizans are of their real relative size, or very near it. No doubt Turner was a much more imaginative artist than Lalanne, and so we may believe

<sup>1</sup> This is very much understated, as I do not wish to convey a false impression to readers not accustomed to compare cubic sizes. The bartizans in question are half-cylinders, those of Turner being three times the width and three times the height of the real ones (proportionally to the arches), so that the difference in cubic contents, the true measure of relative size, is prodigious. In mere superficial measure of paper surface occupied on a drawing, the difference is as six to fifty-four.

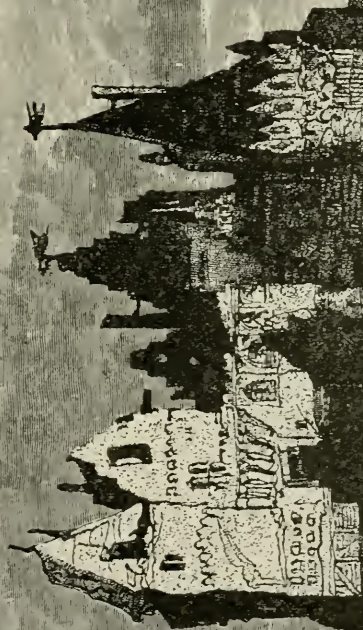
that the tendency to exaggerate certain features is a characteristic of imagination ; but as this exaggeration of some features is accompanied by the diminution of others, the mental process may be more correctly described as a change of proportions rather than exaggeration only.

A good example of this is a vignette by Turner of the Tower of London engraved for Rogers's Poems. The height of the tower is proportionally much exaggerated, but as its width seems diminished in the same proportion, the result is not an exaggeration of the building as a mass ; indeed it seems less vast and formidable than in the reality.

When a writer of great imaginative power has expressed himself, however partially and imperfectly, in one of the graphic arts, he is sure to supply interesting evidence as to the operations of the imaginative faculty, because we know beforehand, from his writings, that the power is present in him, and we may presume that it will not be suddenly extinguished merely because he turns from one art to another. The case of Victor Hugo is one of the most interesting, because he drew with utter frankness, not troubling himself in the

least about technical perfection ; so that every drawing by him is the expression of his own mind, and not an imitation of some artist. From what we have seen of Victor Hugo's drawings (not much in proportion to the quantity of them), it appears that his tendency was to take a strong interest in some one object — often a real or imaginary building — and then to represent it in a strange light not explicable by any known natural law, yet not without a weird and awful character that would be suitable enough to the castle or the heath scene in “Macbeth.” As for fidelity to the object, no critic acquainted with the revelations of style in art would believe that Hugo's impetuous manner could be compatible with such a modest virtue. I do not remember the “Maison des Drapeaux” at Geneva, nor have I seen the belfry at Domfront from which the St. Bartholomew was sounded ; but I am certain that in both cases the drawings were of impressions without any accuracy of detail, and also that there were violent exaggerations of parts.<sup>1</sup> *The Castle of the Middle Ages on*

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately both buildings are demolished, or we might have had photographs taken from them to compare. The drawings used to belong to M. Burty, and were engraved on



# THE MID-AGE

H. H. 1866

F. MEAULLE. sc

A CASTLE OF THE MIDDLE AGES ON THE RHINE.

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*the Rhine*, with the enormous signature, is probably a pure invention; and so may be another Rhine subject, with a broken bridge in the foreground, in which the castle — lighted one knows not how or whence — hangs over a void of darkness, like a flying island passing over a black abyss. In these cases, and others, a single object attracts Hugo's attention, and then is exhibited in the most striking manner, with the most arbitrary and violent chiaroscuro. There is a sort of grim humor and conscious extravagance about such drawing, as in the huge vanity of the signature, eight inches long; the humor of the grotesque, in which the awful and horrible are mingled with a monstrous, impossible sublimity. When this mood predominates, the tendency is to prodigious exaggerations of size and height, like the wild inventions of Rabelais. The two best examples of the grotesque in the work of Gustave Doré, the *Contes Drolatiques* and the *Juif Errant*, contain several examples of buildings in which the imagination has played without restraint. The most audacious instance is the great castle in *Berthe*

wood by Méaulle with the greatest care in preserving their character. (See "L'Art," vol. iii., p. 54.)

*la Repentie* (*Contes*), which is so high — so high — that the rain-clouds rest one above another against its walls, as they do against the front of an unscalable Alpine precipice. Another instance is the drawing called *Le Merveilleux Chastel du Cadet de l'Isle Adam*, with great masses of building about eight stories high on the brink of a deep ravine. Then there is the unending accumulation of donjons, turrets, round towers, and bartizans, in the upper part of the tumultuous battle-scene in the *Juif Errant*; buildings on a scale that no earthly architect ever approached, vast as a hundred Bastilles. I have sometimes thought it possible that these exercises of the imagination, both in Hugo and Doré, might be reminiscences of actual dreams. Many of my readers, if they take an interest in architecture, will probably have sometimes dreamed of buildings far surpassing in size and splendor any that have ever been visible on the earth. This has happened to myself very frequently, especially after architectural studies. Wandering in dreamland, I meet with some incomparable site, and think, "What a place that would be for a castle!" and then somehow the towers rise out of the rocks, and there is a



vision of the most glorious romance. Or I find myself in a cathedral vaster than St. Peter's at Rome and richer than Rouen or Chartres, — a place of ineffable grandeur, with distant, mysterious aisles, lost in impenetrable gloom.<sup>1</sup>

A reputation that is now remembered only as having been at one time a reputation, was founded on the colossal and almost unlimited grandeur of architectural conceptions that bear a resemblance to dreams, and may have been suggested either by real dreams or by a waking state not far removed from dream-producing sleep. John Martin's architecture could not have been accepted in these days of more

<sup>1</sup> My belief is that such dreams must be connected with the first artistic desires of youth, as all the dreams of this kind that have occurred to me have been of mediæval architecture, the only architecture that I cared for in early life. The most remarkable architectural dream that ever happened to me was this: I was standing with a companion or guide (who seemed to be a supernatural personage) on the brink of a deep ravine. On the opposite side there was a stupendous precipice, crowned by a mediæval castle of immense extent and unearthly magnificence. I was absorbed in speechless wonder, and observing detail after detail of charming architectural invention, when the towers began to sway slowly from side to side, and then they all bowed forwards and toppled over together into the abyss with a crash enough to wake the dead. It awoke me at once, and the impression remained for some hours, as if I had seen a real cataclysm.

advanced archæology, but it is remarkable how its vastness and strength appear to have impressed our forefathers. Long rows of thick and sturdy columns support immensely heavy cornices or terraces, and the kind of landscape that generally accompanies this architecture is arranged in hill or hollow to exhibit it to the best advantage, of course without regard to the real nature of the landscape round the ancient cities whose names are borrowed for the occasion. It is an evidence of change in sentiment that these dreams have lost their influence, but I can remember being impressed by them in boyhood, at a time when older and better judges were also very strongly impressed. Martin must, therefore, have had some real imagination, and the reason why we are dead to it now may be simply our more accurate knowledge. We know that the architecture of Nineveh and Babylon, with the exception of the basements, was of a much more perishable character than Martin represented it to be, as well as much lighter in appearance. What remains in Martin is the expression of a vastness unattainable in any buildings that are ever really constructed, and resembling the architectural dreams of Beckford in the

oriental story of "Vathek." If the reader is acquainted with that remarkable effort of imagination, he will remember how powerful is the effect of the colossal buildings, — the towers so lofty that the stairs consisted of eleven thousand steps, and the immense terrace of black marble near the entrance to the Hall of Eblis, that terrace "which was flagged with squares of marble, and resembled a smooth expanse of water, upon whose surface not a leaf ever dared to vegetate." See the effect of the architectural elements in the following short description; without them it would be simply moonlight on a tableland in a mountainous region; with them it is what follows:—

"A death-like stillness reigned over the mountain, and through the air. The moon dilated, on a vast platform, the shades of the lofty columns, which reached from the terrace almost to the clouds. The gloomy watch-towers, whose number could not be counted, were veiled by no roof; and their capitals, of an architecture unknown in the records of the earth, served as an asylum for the birds of darkness, which alarmed at the approach of such visitants, fled away croaking."

### XIII.

#### THE IMAGINATIVE VALUE OF DISTANCE TO BUILDINGS.

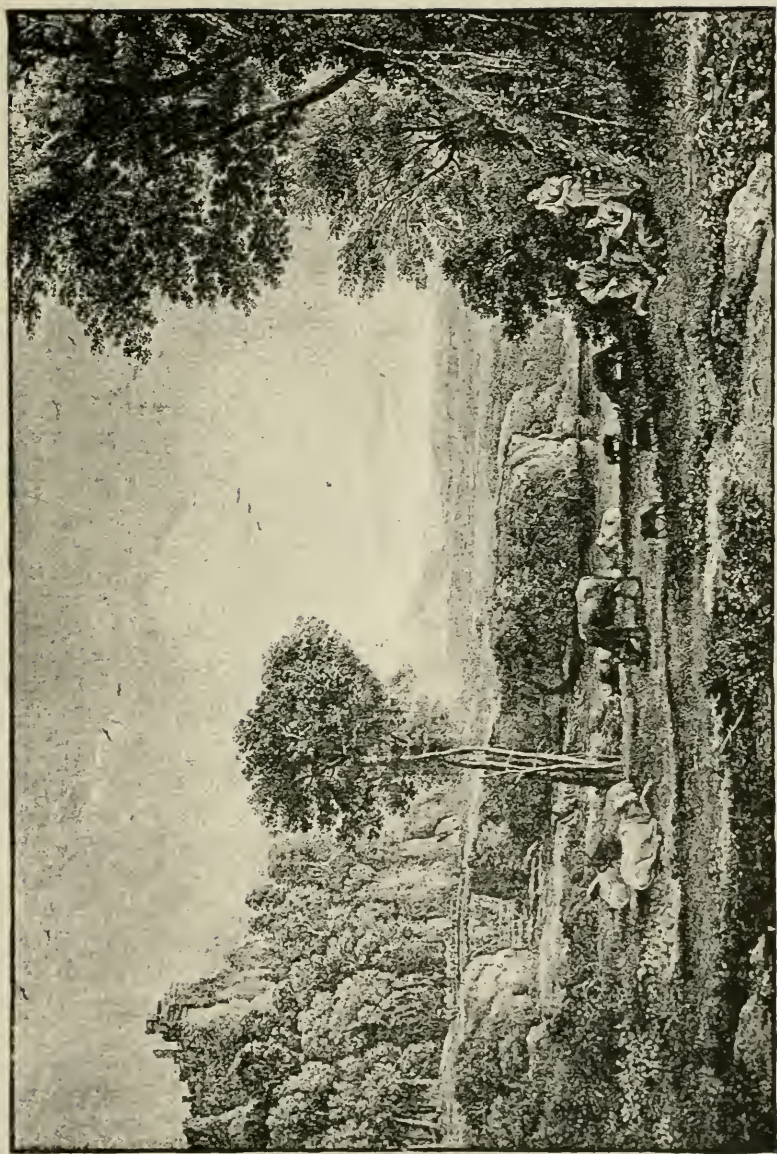
IN Victor Hugo's drawings, I notice that when a building interests him he generally makes it too big for the area of his paper, and brings it too near the spectator. This is one of the commonest mistakes of amateurs and inexperienced artists, a mistake that arises naturally and almost inevitably from the concentration of attention on the main object, to the exclusion of those accessories which a more learned craft would have employed to enhance its value. The inexperienced artist imagines that by making his edifice large on the canvas he will give it the effect of size, but the truth is often the reverse of this, as a building seen at some distance may impress us more with the notion of its vastness than it does when we come close upon it. This is clearly due to the greater activity of the imagination with regard

to that which cannot be examined closely. The same rule holds good in other things than the art of painting, and especially in regard to persons whose influence depends on the degree in which they are able to affect the popular imagination. It may be presumed that nobody understands the art of preserving such an influence better than the Popes of Rome, who never travel about, but remain at a distance from the immense majority of those who are accustomed to look up to them. Kings travel more; still there is a certain remoteness and mystery about them very different from the familiar publicity of Members of Parliament. Even a famous poet requires some removal by distance, which Shelley has gained by lapse of time and Tennyson by retirement.

Following out this idea, I amused myself by observing in many drawings or pictures by artists of great experience and ability, how small and distant some building was in which the chief interest of the piece concentrated itself. In some exceptional cases an important building is put near, but that is generally seen to be a mistake, as in the drawing by Turner of Saint Julian at Tours, which blocks the view and presents an awkward perspective.

The two views of Lillebonne are, on the contrary, excellent examples of the importance that may be given to a castle in the middle distance. In that with the moon the castle seems to fill the drawing, yet it only measures about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches each way, and the drawing measures  $5\frac{3}{8} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$ . In the other view the castle is about an inch long and three quarters of an inch high, yet it looks imposing and lords it over a vast landscape. In the view of Rouen (with the rainbow) the cathedral is not near, as it is seen beyond the bridge and the houses, but it appears enormous. These, however, are only examples of buildings in middle distance. It is still more wonderful how a building in the remote distance of a drawing, where it is reduced to the smallest dimensions consistent with its being seen at all, will at once attract attention to itself. Turner was well aware of this, as we see in the distant aqueduct from the terrace of St. Germain and in many other views or compositions. In a view of Rome from Tivoli, by Gaspar Poussin, the most important objects are a very small white tower, or rather turret, in the middle distance, and the dome of St. Peter's, far away, a mere speck in the remote landscape, yet more important than the voluminous clouds above it.





LANDSCAPE, WITH A CASTLE ON A HILL. CLAUDE.



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The mention of distant Rome brings me at once to Virgil and Milton; indeed, all speculations on the imaginative arts bring us inevitably to the great poets, as Samuel Palmer found in his own experience, — Samuel Palmer, the imaginative landscape-painter who so loved Virgil and Milton, and knew them so well, and derived from them so many suggestions. The reader may remember how in the Eighth Book of the *Æneid* there is a delightful river voyage, when the galleys ascend the Tiber by night, and the river-god considerably stays the current to make the surface like a pond in order that the men may row quite easily. All night long they row past the dark and densely wooded shores, and half the following day, till the sun is high at noon, “when they see far away the walls and the citadel and the few roofs of the houses which now the Roman power has lifted up to heaven.”<sup>1</sup> To my feeling the poetry of this passage is immensely enhanced by the single word “*procul*,” afar, and the first view of the early city that occu-

<sup>1</sup> “Sol medium cœli conscenderat igneus orbem  
Quum muros, arcemque procul, ac rara domorum  
Tecta vident; quæ nunc Romana potentia cœlo  
Æquavit; tum res inopes Evandrus habebat.”

pied the future site of Rome is much more stimulating to the imagination because it is a distant view. We approach the city with the galleys of Æneas, and our aroused curiosity is not to be satiated too soon.

The description of Rome in her magnificence in "Paradise Regained" is also a distant view, the city being miraculously visible from the Syrian desert during the Temptation; and although details are visible, by miracle, we are made to feel the distance still; we have no feeling of being close at hand. In fact, the poet,

"By what strange parallax, or optic skill  
Of vision, multiplied through air, or glass  
Of telescope, were curious to inquire,"

has found an opportunity for describing a city at a greater distance than any painter ever attempted:—

"There the Capitol thou seest,  
Above the rest lifting his stately head  
On the Tarpeian rock, her citadel  
Impregnable; and there Mount Palatine,  
The imperial palace, compass huge, and high  
The structure, skill of noblest architects,  
With gilded battlements conspicuous far,  
Turrets, and terraces, and glittering spires."

After this, a quotation from any other poet is likely to seem an anticlimax, but I may just remind the reader that one of the most effective descriptions in Scott is that very well-known one of Edinburgh as seen by Marmion from the moorland heights of Blackford. I note in this description particularly the employment of the adjective "huge" that we have just met with in Milton on a similar occasion:—

"Such dusky grandeur clothed the height  
Where the huge castle holds its state,  
And all the steep slope down,  
Whose ridgy back heaves to the sky  
Piled deep and massy, close and high,  
Mine own romantic town."

A painter knows exactly why the word "huge" is there. The reason is that at a distance, and under a smoky effect when details are obliterated, a great building looks larger than under any other circumstances. The use of the adjectives "deep and massy, close and high," is also due to the effect of distance, when objects are massed together, and appear loftier than when we see the details.

Scott reminds me of a countryman of his, Mr. George Reid, R. S. A., whose treatment of buildings is always extremely skilful; and I

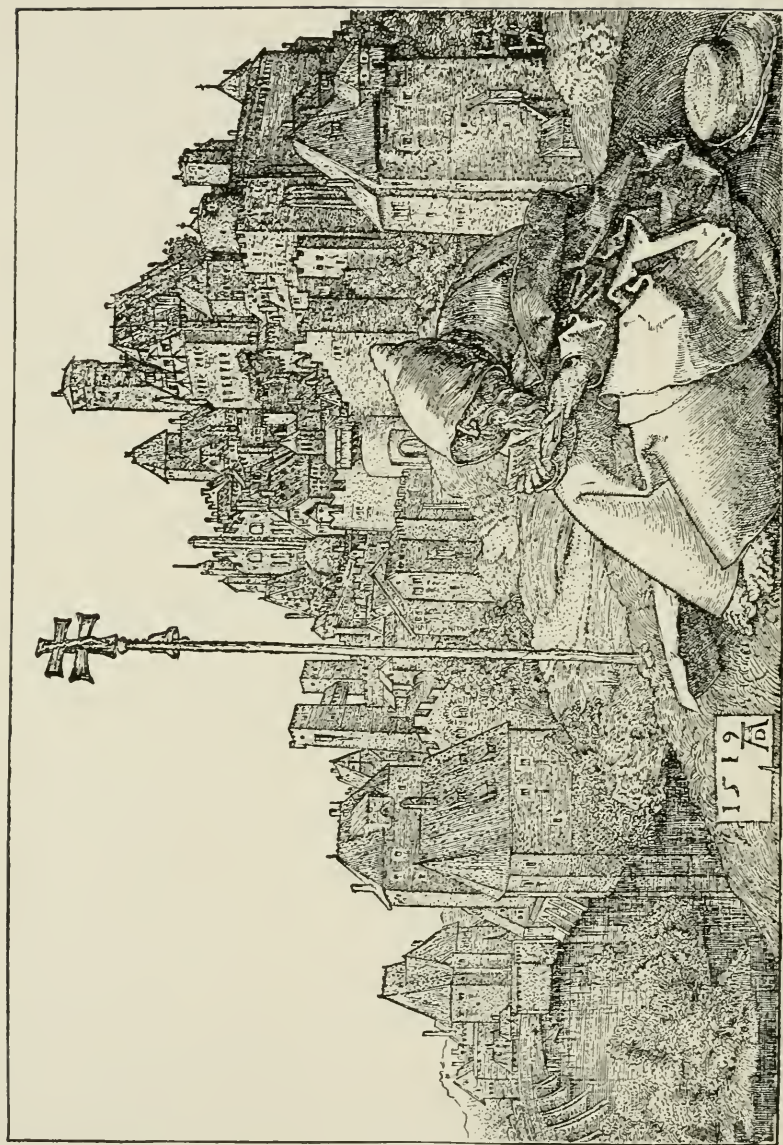
notice that unless he desires to show architectural detail, as in Melrose and Abbotsford, he willingly places a building as far back as he well can. In his illustrations of the Tweed, Dryburgh is no more than a gable with a window rising out of the wood by Tweed shore, and the keep of Norham is a comparatively small mass rising out of a great wood. The tower of Newark is treated on the same principle. Neidpath Castle is only just brought near enough to show its construction.

The best way to appreciate the value of this treatment as a stimulus to the imagination, is to compare it with the necessarily opposite treatment adopted by architectural draughtsmen whose business it is to explain all details clearly. The most romantic edifice loses its romance in a mechanical drawing, and our only chance of restoring it is to imagine how the building would look at a proper distance and under a favorable effect.

Before leaving this part of the subject, I may note one very remarkable effect of distance, which is this. When a building has massive pavilions or lofty towers, like the pavilions of the Louvre or the towers of the







SAINT ANTHONY. ALBERT DÜRER.

Houses of Parliament or Windsor Castle, and the spectator is situated at such a distance that loftier parts alone are visible, they produce, by acting on the imagination, a remarkably strong impression of the vastness of the invisible edifice that connects them; a vastness which, under certain effects of light when the atmosphere is hazy enough to obliterate the details of the towers, may even appear incredible. I have observed this effect in several great buildings, but never in greater perfection than in the Paris Exhibition of 1878, where the building had great pavilions that looked incredibly distant from each other in the haze of evening.

## XIV.

### OF IMAGINATIVE EXECUTION IN DEALING WITH ARCHITECTURE.

THERE is a certain exercise of imaginative power in the treatment of buildings which, to my mind, is far more valuable in art than mere exaggeration; it is the power, not easily described, by which all the harsh, hard, and discordant details of real buildings are fused into a mysterious whole that the mind feels to be intensely poetical.

Fully to understand the value of this treatment, we have only to refer to those stages of the graphic arts in which it was entirely unknown.

It was entirely unknown to the mediæval illuminators, and to the painters of all the early schools, and to the Italian and German engravers of the times when engraving had reached its point of greatness as an independent art.

I have no wish to imply that early painters and engravers were indifferent to the beauty of buildings and to their romantic charm. On the contrary, few characteristics of early art are more delightful than the lovely bits of building so often introduced, especially the distant towns, towers, villages, and homesteads in the backgrounds to all sorts of subjects, in a charming but most irrelevant way. These are often most interesting in themselves, as evidences of the kind of dwellings and fortifications familiar to the artists of those days, and much imagination may have been exercised in the invention of those that were not drawn from nature ; but they are deprived of half their effect in stimulating the imagination of the spectator, by that hard and definite treatment of all objects whatever which was prevalent in early art. The entire absence of mystery in mediæval drawing, and not only of mystery, but of all those picturesque elements of execution which consist in the recognition of accident, imperfection, and decay, was most detrimental to the imaginative effect of mediæval work. The mediæval artist loved newness and clearness above all other qualities ; one might say that he drew like a modern

mechanical draughtsman if he had not possessed such a vigorous decorative invention. When the days of illumination were over, those of early burin-engraving succeeded, and here again, simply from the nature of the art, there was an irresistible temptation to overclearness. Accepting this as technically inevitable, we may enjoy the inventions of these artists. In the case of Albert Dürer, it is evident that he took a keen pleasure in the invention of picturesque distant buildings, simply as a play of the mind after its more serious effort had been expended upon the figures in the foreground. Of all the examples of this taste that it would be possible to mention, Dürer's *St. Anthony* is the most remarkable for the evident enjoyment with which the artist has elaborated the details of a mediæval city. Its gables, turrets, and towers rise in a pyramidal composition which occupies almost the entire background, and the quantity of detail is so great that, in spite of the extreme clearness of the engraving, there is even a sort of mystery arising from mere abundance. It is only by long and steady looking, by a patient exploration, that we can make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with



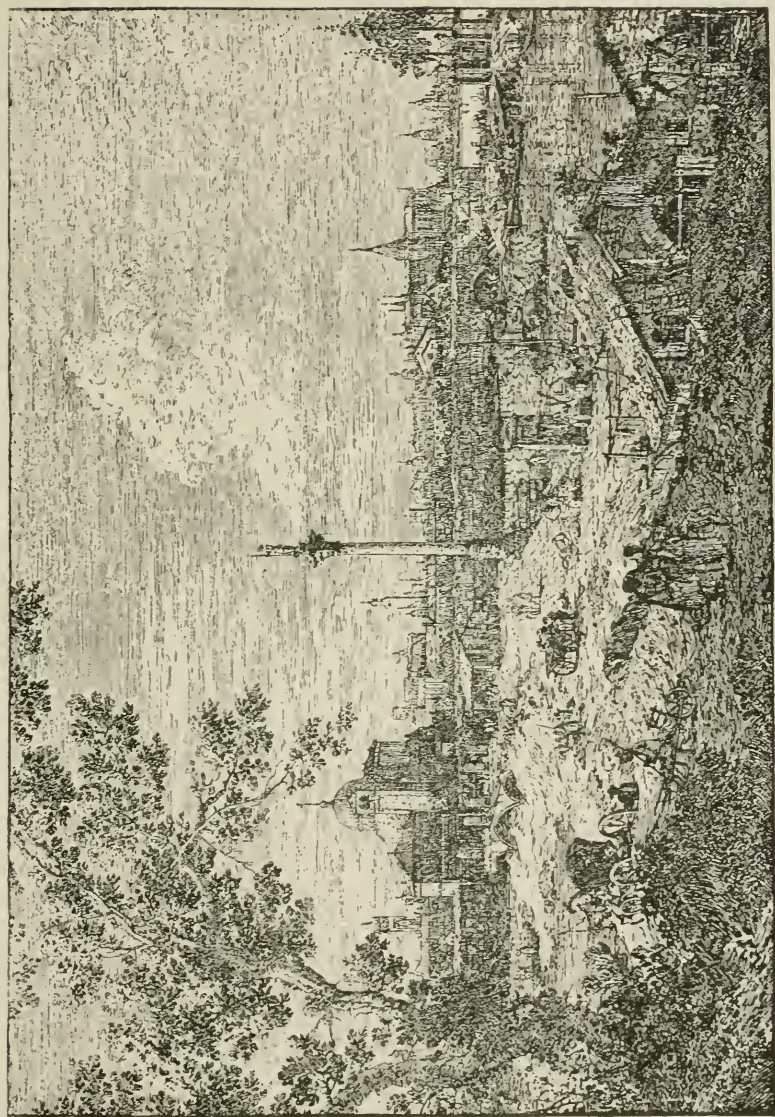
every house and tower. Another very beautiful example is the city on the summit of the eminence in *The Knight, Death, and Devil*. I fancy that Dürer had in his mind an idea of the Celestial City, so much raised above the gloomy common world that it seems inaccessible, and yet the Christian knight is in reality riding towards it through dark and dangerous paths beset with horrors. This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the narrow road on the hill which leads to the city itself. But notwithstanding the rich invention that is so attractive in Dürer, it was impossible, with his methods of execution, that he should convey the notion of an ideal or heavenly city; indeed, almost any of the graphic arts would be too definite for that enterprise, and the most delicate treatment too material. The reader may remember with what cautious and prudent haste Tennyson passes by the difficulty in the "Holy Grail."

"Then in a moment when they blazed again  
Opening, I saw the least of little stars  
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star  
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires  
And gateways in a glory like one pearl —  
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints —  
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot

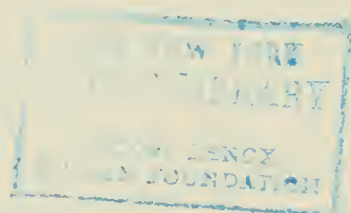
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there  
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,  
Which never eyes on earth again shall see."

The dissatisfied reader may at this point complain that, although I have spoken of a kind of execution which is imaginative and another which is not, I have failed to give any description of the two beyond affirming that a too hard and definite manner is unfavorable to the imagination. I should say, then, that a matter-of-fact style of execution is one which gives clearly all that can be measured with a two-foot rule, like the lines of a quay or the angles of a church, whilst an imaginative style of execution, though often incorrect about what is measurable, is ready to take note, in passing, of many truths and qualities which are sure to be omitted by the other; and consequently the imaginative style, though it does not look the more truthful, is really the more observant of the two. Again, I should say that the imaginative manner would suggest far more than it would positively assert, and would be continually passing from greater to less degrees of definition. Compare Canaletti's Venices with those of Turner. It is possible (and a matter of slight importance) that the





ARCHITECTURAL COMPOSITION. FROM AN ETCHING BY CANALETTI.



testimony of photography may be in favor of Canaletti, but Turner's Venices convey to us the notion of certain qualities in Venice that Canaletti habitually missed. Canaletti's style is hard, clear, and matter-of-fact; the superiority of Turner's style is proved by its greater power of stimulating and exciting the faculty of imagination in ourselves. It is a suggestive style, it does not insist too much, but gives or hints enough of each thing to make us imagine more. This result is attained by the most varying degrees of definition, ranging between complete clearness (for a moment) and an intentional vagueness, in which meaning is incompletely revealed.

The style of Turner was perfectly adapted to a kind of subject that happens to be very familiar to me, the ancient towns of France. The roofs of a town are seldom, if ever, agreeable things to see, because there are always unpleasant angular patches amongst them, and it almost invariably happens that there is one ugly and obtrusive roof to spoil everything. There are no cities more suggestive from a distance than French cities generally are; yet in the numerous illustrations to Malte-Brun's great geography of France, which are quite

matter-of-fact without even the usual improvements that the humblest artists make, these cities are all hideous as dwellings of the Philistines. The imagination of Turner, and his fine taste, enabled him to give a *quality* to a collection of houses ; suggested, no doubt, by what he had seen in parts of the picturesque French cities, but idealized still farther by poetic and artistic feeling.

## XV.

### THE RANGE OF OUR IMAGINATIVE SYMPATHY CONCERNING HUMAN WORK IN LANDSCAPE.

IN a magnificent picture-gallery in a rich man's house a conspicuous place may be given to a landscape full of great natural beauty, and the most conspicuous object in that landscape may happen to be a poor, ill-kept, disorderly cottage that the owner of the gallery would not willingly live in for a day. The cottage in the reality may be worth only a fraction of the sum paid for the painted representation of it; and the owner of the picture would probably not tolerate a real cottage of that kind within the precincts of his park, where the only rustic dwellings are neat and tidy specimens of gardener's architecture.

In examining the reasons for this curious and very well-known fact about the fine arts, that they make things more acceptable in the

fictitious semblance than in the reality itself, we may hear the familiar answer that such things are good in art because they are *picturesque*, by which it is understood that their forms are various and amusing in an irregular, unforeseen manner, and their color rich, perhaps, in mossy greens and umbery browns. Well, no doubt this is often the chief reason for the introduction of such poor buildings into art, but it cannot be the only reason, since the cottages painted by the greatest artists are often decidedly less picturesque than those of inferior men, and, indeed, the devotion to the *ultra* picturesque is invariably the sign of a second-rate intelligence. The artist who gives all the powers of his mind to getting together a variety of picturesque shapes without other intention than the arrangement of quaint material may possibly amuse us for an hour, but he can have little influence on our imagination.

The real secret of influence lies deeper. It is in the appeal to imaginative sympathy, and imaginative sympathy is ready in all who have mind and feeling enough to care seriously about the fine arts. The creative imagination is quite a distinct gift; it is very rare, and at the same time it is a necessity for all artists



who aspire to greatness; but the *sympathetic* imagination is comparatively common, and it is probable that every reader of these pages possesses it, else the mere title of them would effectually scare him away.

Whenever there is any trace of human labor in a landscape the sympathetic imagination is set to work at once, even when the labor is of the rudest and most humble kind. It is even true that rude and humble labors awaken our sympathy more readily than magnificent labors, because we have a kindly feeling towards the humble effort, whereas accomplished power does not seem to need our sympathy. A poor little rustic bridge makes us share the satisfaction of the villagers who erected it; a great railway viaduct is only what is called a triumph of science.

In the Salon of 1885 there was a picture, by Normann, of the Sognefiord, in Norway, a salt-water loch shut in by precipitous mountains of bare rock, — a most oppressive scene, quite of a nature to justify that dread and horror with which all humanity regarded the grandest scenery until modern eyes discovered that beauty was mingled with its grandeur. Can you imagine anything more

dreadful than to have to live just opposite to that enormous mass of immovable granite, so near as to shut out the distance and half the sky, presenting only for your daily contemplation the details of surface and fracture, with here and there a streamlet that fertilizes no grassy bank, no shady trees, but from the upper snows that feed it rushes down desperately to the abyss? A bare precipice of hard stone is in its nature so inhospitable, so unfriendly to man, that he cannot look upon it with those grateful sentiments that he has towards his harvest fields. And yet, in this picture, just opposite to this scene of terrible desolation, there are three or four poor little wooden buildings to show that man lives even there, and the pathetic interest of the work lies in the sympathy that we immediately feel for the inhabitants. "What!" we say to ourselves, "do human beings live in such a solitude?" The artist then tells us, in his way, that this little colony is not deprived of communication with the outer world, for he shows us a steamer under the precipice, steadily making its way on the calm, deep water, with a line of foam at its bows. Small and insignificant as it appears under the giant mountain, and rare as may be





LANDSCAPE, WITH A TOWN IN THE DISTANCE. TITIAN.

its visits, the mere possibility of them is a link with distant humanity. The success of the picture was due, no doubt, in great part to this artifice, by which the sympathetic imagination was first disquieted, and afterwards gently reassured.

In this instance our sympathy was with poor and small humanity living in the presence of overwhelming nature without being overwhelmed by it; but artists also show us man triumphant in his work, as when some lordly castle seems to reign over hill and dale. In this case the scenery ought not to be too magnificent; it is best as at Arundel, for example, where the country is sufficiently varied in hill and plain to give dignity to the castle without detracting from its significance. It is due to Mr. J. F. Hardy to say that I am thinking of his charcoal drawings of Arundel,<sup>1</sup> which are conceived entirely from an imaginative point of view. In these drawings the castle on its height asserts itself so conspicuously that it is sure to excite either sympathy or antipathy. If we look upon it with the feelings of Scott, it is delightful with the most romantic, antiquarian, and poetical associations; if modern radicalism or the higher intel-

<sup>1</sup> Published by the Autotype Company.



lectual modern dissatisfaction has touched us, it becomes a strong hold of barbaric power still partially surviving. "I often," said Matthew Arnold in a well-known Essay, "when I want to distinguish clearly the aristocratic class from the Philistines proper, or middle class, name the former, in my own mind, the *Barbarians*; and when I go through the country *and see this and that beautiful and imposing seat of theirs crowning the landscape*, 'There,' I say to myself, 'is a great fortified post of the Barbarians.'"

It may be objected that I am here passing out of the purely artistic considerations to social considerations, but the truth is that the impressions we derive from the fine arts are so complex that there is no other limit to their suggestiveness than the limits of our own ideas and feelings. The presence or absence of the historical sense is one of the most important of the positive or negative influences that affect our appreciation of human work in landscape. An archæologist, in whom this sense was remarkably strong, was the first to open my eyes to the fact that many people are entirely destitute of it. For them an ancient hall, a baronial castle, is simply a structure of a certain shape that occupies a certain space



in the picture. If it is not imposing by its size, they do not feel its antiquity to be imposing. But if you have the historical sense, the old building speaks to you, in a language of its own, of the generations who have lived and died within its walls, and have regarded it with love or pride, in days that are no more.

There may, however, possibly be one drawback to the advantages of possessing this historical sense. A painter in whom the sense was naturally strong, and afterwards developed by culture, might fall into an error from which another less gifted and less cultivated might escape. This would occur if his peculiar interest in old buildings led him to regard them with an affection blind to their artistic deficiencies. Whenever, in the fine arts, from any cause the interest felt by the artist in his work is not purely an artistic interest there is danger. The only extraneous passions that are an unmixed benefit to painters are those for poetry and music, because in these arts the purely artistic element predominates over all others. Sciences, though they may be helpful, may also be dangerous to the imaginative art of painting. With regard to archæology, so long as it remains a sentiment only, a conservative

affection for what is old, it can do nothing but good to a landscape-painter ; it lends a pathetic interest to many a scene which without it would signify little. On the other hand, a highly developed scientific archæology would almost inevitably give antiquities too great a space on their own account, as material objects, without regard to the imaginative artistic sentiment, which ought to be the dominant motive of the picture. For example, the archæologist has no objection to a great unrelieved space of blank wall, if it is an ancient wall, but the pictorial artist feels it to be an embarrassment, whether it is a piece of antiquity or not. Again, the archæologist is interested in ancient battle-fields, but the pictorial artist inquires first of all whether they are good landscapes.

As the imagination carries us into the regions of the ideal, it seems to make our sympathies more general with regard to what we see in art than they are in the presence of the reality itself. Browning remarked long since in some well-known lines, that we see things when they are painted which we miss in the reality ; and not only do we see beauties in pictures that escape us in nature, but we have livelier and warmer, and I may add, far *kinder*

sympathies at the call of the imaginative artist than the real world usually awakens in us. The reason seems to be because the awakening of imagination in us by the artist both elevates and intensifies our feelings, and the reality does not stimulate our imagination as an imaginative picture stimulates it. Consider how carefully the sight of *real* poverty is excluded from the houses of the rich. The only poor people admitted in splendid rooms are the domestics who serve; and although they are often badly lodged in lightless holes and corners, care is always taken that they shall be well dressed, so that their poverty may be hidden from the eye. The difference between imagination and reality may be understood by asking how the owner of some valuable beggar picture by Rembrandt or Murillo would like real beggars in his rooms. The imaginary sympathies are not only the most agreeable, but they are by far the most comprehensive. They descend into a thousand details. A painter represents for us some poor cottage garden, and we immediately appreciate all the humble attempts of the cottager to adorn his dwelling. The common flowers, the cheap shells, the bits of spar, the narrow walls, the tiny arbor

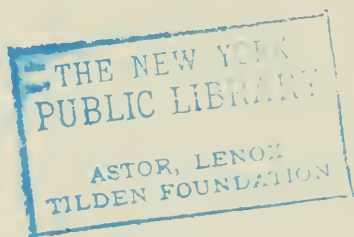
where the children play in summer, all these things gain immediately a fictitious value in a picture simply because the painted representation is itself a fiction. When figure-painters represent interiors they well know the value of simplicity and poverty as pathetic elements, whereas in real life all men prefer the exact opposites of simplicity and poverty. I know that in a good painting there is always the refined taste in the artist himself which arranges materials harmoniously; and by a natural error that the artist intends us to commit, we attribute this refinement to the inhabitant of the poor dwelling represented, but in real life most people respect vulgar interiors, if they show signs of wealth, more than the most tasteful arrangements of worthless things. Possibly the real refinement of good artists may ultimately contend with some effect against the false refinement of commonplace expenditure, but the result attained hitherto is simply to have encouraged an idealizing state of mind in which we recognize the beauty of humble things *on canvas*.

It may seem, at first sight, as if these remarks concerned rather the painters of rustic interiors than landscape-painters, but many





WASHERWOMEN. RUYSDAEL.

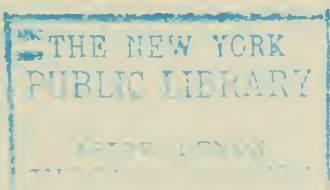


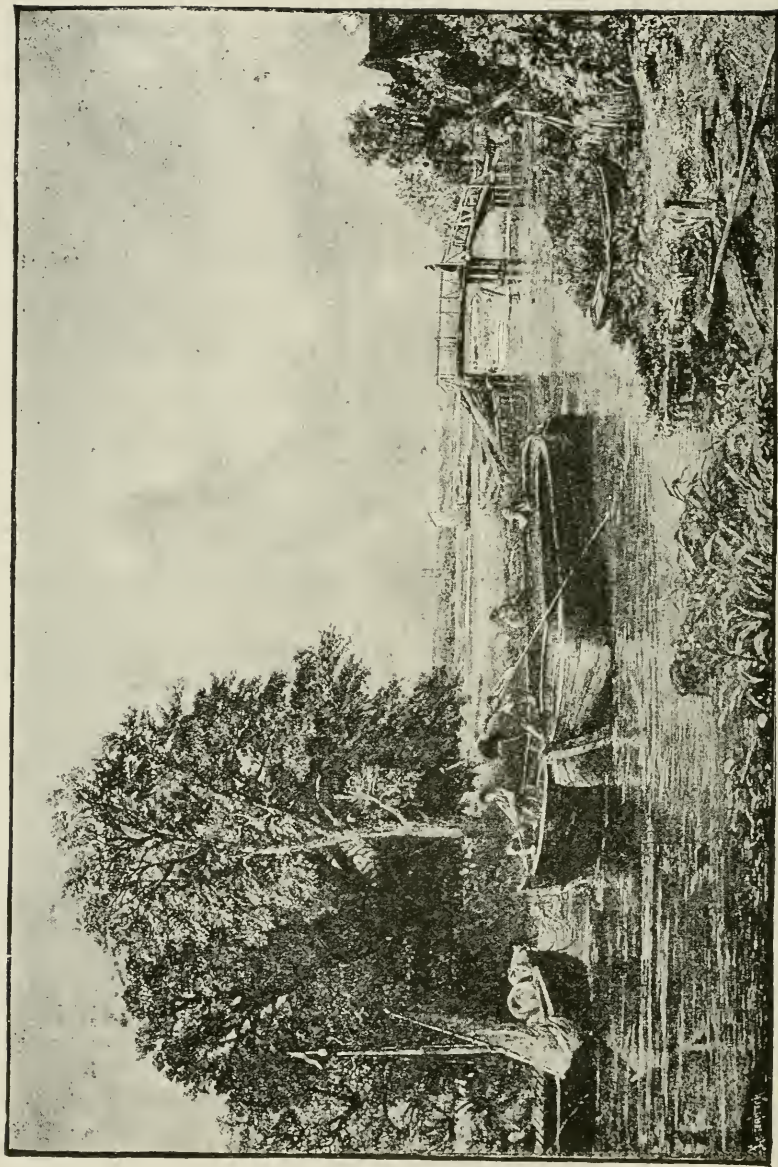


landscape-painters have frequently, and successfully, appealed to this fictitious interest in the humble efforts of the poor. Cottages and their gardens, rude and primitive little bridges, rustic paths and stiles, poor fishermen's boats, and figures busy in all the common occupations that can be pursued in the open air, are seized upon with avidity by the most prudent and ingenious landscape-painters, who calculate upon the natural and constant tendencies of the public. It is pleasant to believe that the interest taken by such painters in humble life is a real interest, and not feigned for the purposes of their art. It may have been real and genuine at first, to become purely artistic afterwards. The following suggestions may offer some explanation of its origin.

There is no human pursuit which gives such excellent opportunities for observing life quietly and silently as the occupation of a landscape-painter. He sits for hours together apparently absorbed in painting a cottage or a group of trees, yet in a purely accidental way he will see the life of the little place far better than the squire when he comes to pay his visit of patronage or kindness. In a very short time people entirely forget his presence, and

go on with their life and talk exactly as if he were not there. Hour by hour he is a privileged spectator. He is supposed to be entirely occupied with his painting, which becomes a sort of screen for him, and behind it there is nothing that he may not see or hear. The spectacle of real life is not so concentrated as a theatrical performance, but the reality of it gives an unrivalled interest for one who cares about reality, and the very absence of concentration makes it easier to follow with half the mind. An artist could not, whilst painting, do anything requiring the close application of the intellect, but he can follow the reading of an easy book or quietly listen to conversation. He can observe in two ways at the same time: in his own artist way for shapes and colors, and in a more broadly human way for the labors and incidents of common life. Hence it may come to pass, after some years of sketching from nature, that a landscape-painter has quite an exceptionally large acquaintance with common out-of-door existence; and if he is imaginative he has a great store of reminiscences to draw upon for the invention of foreground incident. Constable and Turner are both remarkable for their perfect imaginative





LOCK ON THE STOUR. CONSTABLE.

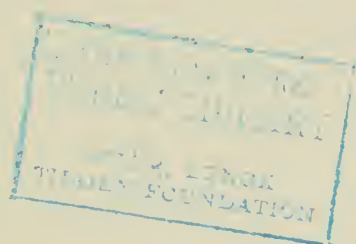
sympathy with common life and work. In Constable the range is narrow, but the knowledge is most intimate and familiar. He knew windmills and watermills like a miller, and thoroughly understood the life of farm-servants and boatmen on the banks of his well-beloved Stour. One of the finest incidents in his pictures, the "leaping horse," is due to his acquaintance with a strictly practical matter, namely, that the fields through which the Stour passes were enclosed by barriers to prevent the cattle from straying, and that the horses were taught to leap these barriers because there were no gates. So far the incident is a simple fact, and the reader may ask what it has to do with imagination. It was treated imaginatively by the artist, who was careful to display the nobility of the horse with the dignity of his harness, ornamented about the collar with crimson fringe. "Constable," says Leslie, "by availing himself of these advantages and relieving the horse, which is of a dark color, upon a bright sky, made him a very imposing object."

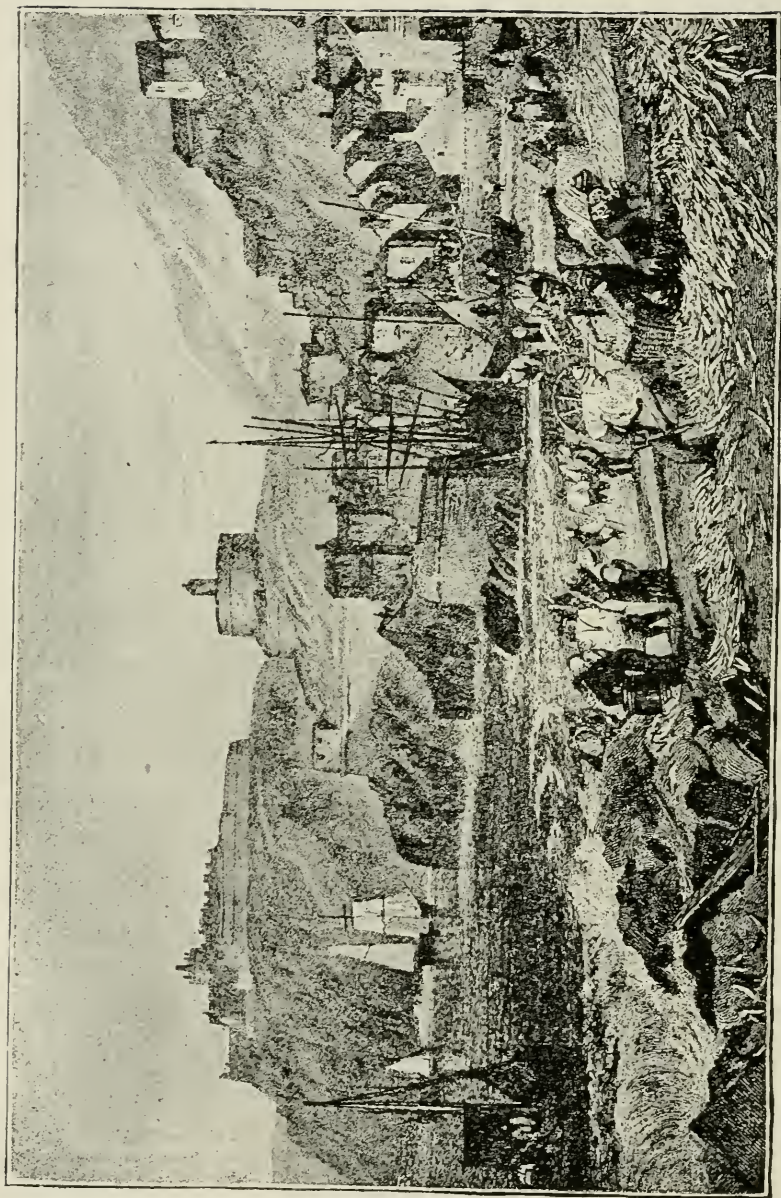
In those expressions of love for nature that have been preserved in Constable's own words, it is curious how unfailingly he mentions the

results of humble human labor. The materials of his art were to be found, he said, in every *lane* and under every *hedge*. "But the sound of water escaping from mill-dams, willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts, and brickwork — I love such things. Shakespeare could make everything poetical; he tells us of poor Tom's haunts among 'sheepcotes and mills.' As long as I do paint I shall never cease to paint such places. They have always been my delight." Leslie confirms this prediction, by adding that "the last picture Constable painted, and on which he was engaged on the last day of his life, was a mill, with such accompaniments as are described in this letter."

The range of Turner's sympathy with human labors is too well known to require any exposition here; but it may be observed that, although it includes magnificent labors like the building of Carthage, it includes in far greater quantity and frequency the most humble labors of ordinary English and French life. In many of Turner's foregrounds the human work, so far from being neglected, is undeniably over-done; there are too many ungainly figures, and their industry, if we observe it, detracts from the repose of the







SAINT MAWES, CORNWALL. TURNER.

picture, whilst it withdraws attention from the landscape subject. In the views of St. Mawes, Cornwall, the landscape subject is noble, and requires that breadth of repose which Girtin would certainly have given it; but Turner's foregrounds are uncomfortably filled up with fisher people and innumerable fishes that must have sorely tried the patience of the engraver. The corrective of this uncomfortableness in Turner's more crowded foregrounds is usually some working man in temporary rest, sitting on the gunwale of a boat or the edge of a little jetty, with his arms folded and a pipe in his mouth. It is very characteristic of Turner that to illustrate the "*Datur hora quieti*," he should have represented a plough left in the furrow and sailing craft moored to the bank of a sluggish river. He took an interest in petty commerce, showing us the dog-dealers in Paris, with the announcement, "*Chiene* (sic) *à vendre*," and the flower markets near the Parisian Palace of Justice and the imposing front of the cathedral at Rouen. His river shores are almost invariably littered with common things relating to the commerce of the place, — logs of wood, barrels, or packages. The ordinary means of locomotion interested

him. He drew and painted diligences and steamboats; and in later life the railway, getting over the dreadful mechanical difficulties of rails and locomotives by the most judiciously sketchy treatment.

Unimaginative artists may, of course, illustrate human labors as frequently and abundantly as their more gifted brethren; but in their hands these labors will remain prosaic by the absence of ideal dignity. The sympathy of a great artist, being imaginative, ennobles prosaic details. This is the beneficent power of the Imagination, — in the highest sense a most useful power, — to reveal the essential dignity, or at least the possible dignity of the common things and works that seem vulgar to the spirit of gentility.

I need hardly do more than mention the name of Millet in connection with this part of the subject. The simple dignity of his figures is now universally known, and they are usually engaged in the most humble occupations. He did not flatter his peasant models on the score of physical beauty, but when he observed some unconscious nobility in the carriage or gesture, he never failed to make the most of it. And yet the bare truth as it is in

nature, without the presence of imaginative power in the artist, would never have touched the world. One of the best proofs that this imaginative power was genuine is to be found in the perfect unity and simplicity of purpose in the unobtrusive landscapes which accompanied the figures of Millet; and in the courage (conscious or not) with which he so often made the landscapes expressive of the monotony and dreariness that accompanied the peasants' toil. A shallower painter would have said to himself, "My figures look rather sad and melancholy, so I must charm the purchaser with delightful rural scenery."

No artist was ever more clearly conscious of the value of imagination in art than Samuel Palmer, who from the first made his choice between literal transcription and the imaginative treatment of reality; and it is remarkable in connection with this subject that Palmer had as strong a sympathy with humble rustic life as Constable, though his love of beauty and his idyllic feeling made impossible for him the painfully sad sympathy of Millet. As Constable loved the common world, and said, "I am not made for the great, nor the great for me," so we are told of Palmer that he did



not despise the society of the rural poor, but during his travels on foot for the study of nature would contentedly "take his place, after a hard day's work, in some old chimney-corner, joining, on equal terms, the village gossip."

"He held," says his son, "and not unwisely, that intelligence is not quite denied to those who lead a quiet country life, to be lavished on those favored ones who live a grimy one in the turmoil of cities. "Virgil," he wrote, "was simple enough to suppose that a country life had an influence on our common nature, nor was he aware that the cultivation of the earth was a stupefying employment, and the peasant, skilled in the varieties of rural labor, a log. No! *Non omnia possumus omnes*, — that discovery was reserved for us. How could Virgil anticipate our progress, with whom the bucolic mind has become the synonym of fatuity? But those who are behind the age, and not very anxious to overtake it, will discern in their ancient friends — in the Ploughman who lives in Chaucer's verse, and his kindred, — something better than a barbaric foil to the intelligence of the modern artisan."

It is worth remarking that the titlepage of



Samuel Palmer's Life consists of a sepia drawing of rural implements of the most primitive kind, with a broad-brimmed mower's hat. In an early part of the volume his son gives an interesting description of the village of Shoreham, where his father lived for some time, and received many lasting impressions of rural beauty. The inhabitants are not omitted: "The soil was tilled, and the golden corn was reaped, by sturdy villagers whose dress was picturesquely beautiful, their implements archaic. Their strenuous flails resounded in spacious, lichen-covered barns, where the thick masses of dark-green moss half hid the deep, overhanging thatch. They lived in oak-beamed cottages with ample chimney-corners, in which, on tempestuous winter nights, many a strange legend and weird superstition lingered still."

So far we have only been considering Palmer's interest in reality, but an extract from one of his letters shows the immense importance that he attached to imagination. The capitals are his own.

"Claude, Poussin, Bourdon, did not attempt to satisfy that curiosity of the eye which an intelligent tourist ever feeds and never sates, nor did they attempt to reproduce a scene; for they knew that

every hedgerow contains more matter than could be crowded into a picture-gallery, and that, supposing they could deceive the eye, the real impression could not be completed but by touch and hearing, the gushes of air, and the singing of birds. They addressed not the perception chiefly, but the IMAGINATION, and here is the hinge and essence of the whole matter."

Guided by our knowledge that Palmer had a real sympathetic interest in common rustic life, and also that what he most valued in art was imagination, we find this taste and this principle fully exemplified in his own works. His compositions may be broadly divided into two classes, — illustrations of the poets, and designs suggested by nature, though never slavishly copied from actual scenes. In both classes of designs the references to rustic labor are very frequent. The figures in most cases have some definite rustic employment; they are not simply figures inserted to fill up a vacant space, and there is a beautiful sympathy with the life and functions of all of them, from the bellman who goes down the village street to the good farmer who stops his horse to bestow charity. How stimulating an imaginative motive was to Palmer may be proved by what

he wrote to Mr. Valpy about the first of these two subjects : —

“ You ask me to show you anything which specially affects my inner sympathies. Now only three days have passed since I did begin the meditation of a subject which for twenty years has affected my sympathies with sevenfold inwardness, though now for the first time I seem to feel, in some sort, the power of realising it. It is from one of the finest passages in what Edmund Burke thought the finest poem in the English language. The passage includes ‘the bellman’s drowsy charm.’ I never artistically knew ‘such a sacred and homefelt delight’ as when endeavoring, in all humility, to realise, after a sort, the imagery of Milton.”

It was a great advantage to Samuel Palmer that the connection between his own art and poetry was always present to his mind, as it kept his art consciously imaginative, and would have prevented him, if there had been any danger of such a catastrophe, from falling into that commonplace literalism which is the sure destiny of manual skill when left to its own unaided resources. He believed that the habit of reading the great poets was the best fertilizer of a painter’s brain ; and in one of his letters to me I remember that he did not speak simply of poetry but of *old* poetry, as if old

poetry were a better stimulus than new. I remember feeling instinctively that he was right, and no doubt the explanation is that the older the association with the experience and feelings of mankind the more poetical everything becomes. Even the newest verse, when it is intended to be poetry of the highest kind, is usually archaic in the choice of its materials, and often in forms of language. The agriculture described by poets is still that which was known to Virgil, and their heroes more frequently travel in sailing-boats or on horseback, like the paladins of Ariosto, than in steamers and railway trains. A poor traveller on foot, with a bundle at the end of a stick, is much better fitted for poetic art than a young man on a bicycle, and yet the bicycle (one would think) ought to be a poetic instrument, for swiftness is certainly poetical; but the want of old associations with the bicycle, and perhaps its too great mechanical perfection, are against it, besides the necessity for good macadamized roads. Turner's introduction of steamers is a case in point, and may at first sight appear contrary to my theory; yet it is evident that in this case there were other attractions for the artist, — the volumes of escaping

steam, and the fine contrast between the water churned into foam and waves and the calmer water around it.

With regard to the introduction of modern mechanical industry in art, I happened last winter to pass the great French metallurgic establishment of the Creuzot. It was at night, and as the train slowly passed out of the station, the place presented itself in an aspect which certainly brought it within the category of available suggestions for imaginative art. There was moonlight, and just under the moon the vast workshops and long chimneys happened at one moment to come into a sort of mountainous composition with enormous clouds of smoke and steam. The lighting of the scene was not left entirely to the moon. Some of the workshops were lighted with gas, others with blinding stars of electric light that shone amongst the moving clouds and made some masses of building look intensely black by contrast. The ghastly brilliance of the electric light, the yellow gaslight, and the pale moon far above produced a complex play of effects that impressed me strongly; but, on analyzing my impression afterwards, it seemed that the whole of it could not be conveyed in

painting. It was partly due to the changes of composition produced by the motion of the train, and partly to the clang of the great steam-hammers and the confused noise of many labors, and also to my own previous knowledge that the four mighty blast-engines were called after the four winds, with the old Latin names inscribed upon them. Besides this there came a recollection that I had read about some place where —

“Nigh on the plain, in many cells prepared,  
That underneath had veins of liquid fire  
Sluiced from the lake, a second multitude  
With wondrous art founded the massy ore,  
Severing each kind, and scummed the bullion dross :  
A third as soon had formed within the ground  
A various mould, and from the boiling cells,  
By strange conveyance, filled each hollow nook.”

Even the strange lights reminded me of that pile where —

“Many a row  
Of starry lamps and blazing vessels, fed  
With naphtha and asphaltus, yielded light  
As from a sky.”

So the reader perceives that if a scene of modern industry suggested a painting, it recalled poetry at the same time ; and it happens that the poetry was *old* poetry, written by Palmer's own master, Milton.



## XVI.

### PASSIVE IMAGINATION, OR REVERIE.

THIS is the condition of mind in which we are capable of following without effort the active imagination of others, but do not create anything by an imaginative effort ourselves. It is most familiar to us in listening to music, provided that we listen simply for the pleasure of the moment, and not for any purpose of criticism.

Passive imagination finds its pleasures, so far as landscape is concerned, in looking at pictures simply for enjoyment, and especially in the changing beauty of nature. This delight in natural beauty is understood by those who do not share it to be what they call an idle pleasure, and they sometimes condemn it on this ground. We may accept the imputation of idleness in this case, whilst declining to accept the blame. The state of passive

imagination is idle, assuredly, in this sense, that for the moment it produces nothing, but it may be receptive. The listener to music is not a composer, but he is a *recipient* of musical ideas. This is so far understood that it is not considered a waste of time to go to concerts; then why should it be a waste of time to allow our minds to be saturated with the beauty of that natural or painted landscape which is the music that the eyes desire? The state of active production, or even of conscious observation, is not, and ought not to be, permanent. We all of us need times of pure and simple receptivity, and if we are ourselves productive, the only difference is that we need such times far more imperiously than others.

As to passive imagination in the enjoyment of painted landscape, it appears necessary that it should be disengaged from ideas of criticism, and the same kind of imagination in the presence of nature needs to be disengaged from ideas of production.

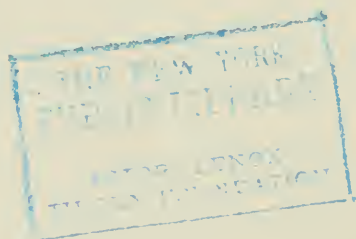
The interference of the critical spirit is, I believe, invariably fatal to the imaginative enjoyment of art. The critical condition of mind might be friendly to imagination if it accompanied or followed it, but criticism never

does that for long without interposing objections of some kind; and being itself much more intellectual than sympathetic, is always likely to interpose a discordant note of its own, or else to bring into disproportionate and unnecessary prominence some weakness in the imaginative artist, some deficiency of knowledge, some error of taste, which, had it only been left to itself, would never have attracted attention. I am able to remember three distinct phases in my own feelings with reference to Claude. If ever, in boyhood, I looked over a collection of engravings, the Claudes always stopped me and set me dreaming about lands where the trees were always grouped majestically or beautifully, and seas where the ships sailed into ports adorned with princely architecture, and the sunshine fell softly on the foreground or glittered on the harmless waves. I had a drawing-master, a man of the most gentle temperament, who never could mention Claude without infusing I know not what additional gentleness and tenderness into the tones of his voice, and in golden afternoons of summers past long ago, he would gaze on the light that reminded him of an ideal Italy, and talk to me of "Claude Lorraine."

It was in this perfectly uncritical state of youthful ignorance that I was able to enjoy Claude, in print and picture, with an innocent, dreamy enjoyment that I should now call a condition of passive imagination. At the same time Salvator seemed very grand and wild, and I had instinct enough to perceive that there was something imposing in the sombre masses of foliage in Gaspar Poussin. I can throw myself back into that youthful condition even now by an effort of memory, a condition in which it was possible simply to feel and imagine, by humbly following the imagination of the painter, without having to form any kind of definite opinion about him. But soon afterwards came three influences all at once, a closer and more literal study of nature, the criticisms of Ruskin, and photography. These influences made it impossible for many a year to dream with Claude in the old innocent, passive way. What was artificial in his works had become too obvious for his very real love of nature to overcome it, and what seemed to me the ostentation of his art had overshadowed the amenity of his sentiment. Long afterward, when the critical effect of modern naturalism had spent its force, it became possible once more to sym-



LANDSCAPE. CLAUDE.





pathize, in imagination, with the serenity of Claude's spirit, and to wander at idle times happily enough in the earthly paradise that he created, with a dreamy and not too critical admiration of its beauties. At the same time the tendency that comes upon us in full maturity to use the imagination more, and the critical faculty rather less, has certainly led me to see more grandeur in other old landscape masters of late years, and to appreciate much better their largeness, and dignity, and solemnity of conception. We all of us invariably believe that a change in our views is in the direction of progress, so it is but natural that this change should appear to myself in the guise of an advance; but whether it be an advance or not, the result of it is to make passive imagination possible again, and without it nobody can appreciate the imaginative powers of great artists.

It is probable that in the future the faculty of passive imagination will be less interfered with than it was in the middle of the nineteenth century by the matter-of-fact criticism of that time, and the sudden effect of photography. It is not conceivable that any future influence can be like the first effect of these scientific

influences. The probability seems rather to be that as clearly detailed photography, and extremely accurate drawing, and very highly finished woodcutting, have now become so common that they are as much a matter of course as the finish of a blank sheet of note-paper, they will in future scarcely attract more attention ; and as people will be surfeited with prodigious quantities of facts, the tendency may be to seek a deliverance from facts in the fairyland of Imagination. It will then be understood that an artist is nothing if not imaginative, and that although his public may not need creative genius, it will need the genius of imaginative sympathy, which is, happily, common enough in human nature left to its own instincts and not prevented by the acquired habit of analysis.

Before leaving this subject of receptive imagination, which in a larger work would deserve more prolonged study, I wish to add some expression of the belief that it is one of the best gifts we have, and one of the most conducive to human happiness. I have said that it is a common gift, and we may be thankful that it is common. Without it many an existence would be hopelessly and absolutely dreary,





BANDITS. SALVATOR ROSA.

which is now brightened on the imaginative side by those influences of literature, art, and music, which are all really one and the same influence. The readers of the great imaginative writers, the admirers of the great painters, the listeners to the great musicians, may be unable, themselves, to create either poem, picture, or sonata, and some critic may coldly tell them that they are destitute of imagination, but they, in their hearts, know better. Is it nothing to be able to follow the lead of genius? It is the best deliverance from the monotony of common life; it is, to many, the only opening that looks out of a hard, mechanical, grinding, vulgar world. Imaginative art of all kinds is best appreciated in those deserts of brick and stone where multitudes are deprived of nature, and here it comes as a relief and a repose to the spirit, disconnected from any personal ambition. It is to the citizen what the fields are to the rustic, the mountains to the mountaineer. And there is no kind of art which gives this relief more completely than imaginative landscape.

The perfectly passive enjoyment of natural scenery is perhaps difficult for artists who think too much of their work, and that is one



of the drawbacks attendant upon high professional culture; but for many others it is the healthiest of indolent pleasures. It has been called "the opium-eating of the intellect," which is an unfair comparison. It is much rather the repose of the intellect, and the enriching of other faculties by a process that involves no labor, a natural education that nothing can replace.

It is at the same time, for those who are destined to work afterward in the fine arts, an invaluable and indispensable preparation. We must begin by observing without any sense of effort before we are able to apply the mind to observation as a business. All artists have been amateurs in the real beginning, however early in life were the first serious studies, and all amateurs have begun by watching things as idle people watch them. We are first enticed by the pleasures of indolent imagination, and afterwards led into work by a sort of accident. Between the ease of indolence and the ease of mastery there lies a difficult passage, that season of apparent failure when the imaginative faculty is impeded by the straining of the attention.



## XVII.

### WORKING IMAGINATION, OR INVENTION, AS APPLIED SPECIALLY TO LANDSCAPE.

AFTER examining the question of invention to the best of my ability, with the help of those writers who have given it the most careful study, and especially with the help of M. Paul Sourian, whose *Théorie de l'Invention* is a perfect model of close reasoning and original observation, I have come to a conclusion somewhat different from his, that is to say, I believe now that invention is simply imagination that the possessor can set to work on a given task. In my view, the distinction between the inventive imagination and the common faculty lies simply in this capability of discipline.

To this it may be answered that the idea which would be considered the real invention usually comes to us involuntarily, as, for example, when a novelist hits upon a new and

original plot at a time when his mind is occupied with something entirely different. I am aware of this, but do not consider that the real display of inventive power is to be sought for in the original idea, which is often of the most extreme simplicity, and is not unfrequently borrowed from another source without any kind of acknowledgment. Notes of first ideas, both by artists and writers, are frequently so crude that they give no conception of the future work, nor has the inventor himself any clear conception of it; he only sees his way as he proceeds. What he does is to take a motive and see what he can make of it by the application of his inventive powers. Then comes the real test, which is the working out of the idea so as to present it in the most striking form, and with the most vivid appearance of reality. To accomplish this, the inventor, in common language, "sets his wits to work;" that is to say, he possesses a kind of imagination that is obedient to the will. The common person seems to have no imagination because he is unable to apply his disconnected dreamings to a purpose.

When the real inventor has got hold of a good motive, he applies his mind to the

business of invention in this way. He is not able to invent at a moment's notice, but he knows that in a space of time, which is almost definite in his own mind, he will certainly be able to work out the requisite amount of detail. An arrangement is made between a publisher and a clever novelist by which the novelist promises to deliver a manuscript at a certain date. At the time when the promise is made he is in ignorance as to details, but he knows that by the application of his imaginative faculty he will be able to shape them. An uninventive person might see almost as much of the subject at a first glance, but the difference is that he would never see anything more.

Now, if we accept my theory that Invention is Imagination that can be made to work, it must follow that the real inventors will work at invention just as they would at anything else, and that those who "wait for inspiration" are just the people to whom inspiration is least likely to be given. Does not experience generally confirm this? Setting aside the vulgar error that men of genius are idle fellows (an error that can only arise from ignorance of the toil involved in that which seems so easy), and looking to the real facts of the case, do we

not find, when we know them personally, that they work just like other professional men? We may even go further, and say that if there is a difference, it is in favor of the men of genius, who work *more* than common men, because they have finer powers of work, and take a pleasure in exercising them. Consider the amount of work done by Shakespeare, Cervantes, Scott, Balzac, Victor Hugo, and amongst painters, by Rubens, Titian, Claude, and Turner! In some cases it is true that the great labors of men of genius have been performed under the stimulus of necessity, but we do not find that wealth leads to indolence in their case. Victor Hugo and Turner continued to work long after they had become rich men.

Invention in landscape, as in every other art, requires a certain liberty, but in landscapes especially this liberty involves a condition of a peculiar kind, which has led to the belief that landscape painters are an especially careless race. Bound down to rigid conditions of truthful portraiture, the landscape painter would be unable to compose. The painter of the figure can group his personages without destroying the likeness, and alter their shapes on the



THE TRAVELLERS. BERGHEM.





canvas by simply altering their attitudes, but the faithful portraiture of mountains would take away the possibility of composition. It follows from this that all inventive landscape painters prefer material of a kind that is easily arrangeable, and that if the material is not arrangeable by nature, they arrange it in spite of itself. It is a part of their art to do this, the strong men have always done it, and their strong successors are likely to continue the practice.

The reader probably remembers the distinction in the French language between a *meuble* and an *immeuble*; a piece of furniture is called a movable, and a house is called an immovable. In landscape painting we may establish the same distinction, though not exactly in the same way. I should not call a peasant's cottage an immovable from the landscape painter's point of view, because he can do what he likes with it, alter its form, or change its position, but I should call Somerset House and Waterloo Bridge immovables from the painter's point of view. Such things are the greatest of all embarrassments for the inventive artist. He can hardly exercise his genius upon them, except in the choice of an effect of light.

Mountains are difficult to deal with for the same reason, but not in the same degree, as they may be treated with some liberty. Still, a mountain is a permanent feature in a country, and no painter would give to Mont Blanc the outline of the Matterhorn. The most tractable materials for the inventive artist are trees (that may be supposed to grow in any favorable situation), clouds that may be grouped in any manner consistent with their character, ships and boats that may be supposed to have floated accidentally into the most charming arrangements, cottages that may be built over again cleverly with the brush with the most anti-Philistine improvements, and all the multitude of foreground things that may be shifted here and there at pleasure.





GIRL WITH TAMBOURINE. FROM THE ETCHING BY TURNER.

## XVIII.

### COMPOSITION AND IMAGINATION.

I TAKE the difference between composition and imagination to be that Composition is simply the art of putting materials tastefully together, whereas Imagination provides the materials themselves in the shape of images clear enough to be painted.

It may be objected to this account of the matter, that it is too simple, and that Imagination of the highest kind would provide the images and the composition at the same time, by a complete synthesis. To know all about a matter of such difficulty we ought to be able to ask questions of imaginative artists, but they might be as little inclined to talk as Frederick Walker, or as little able to express themselves as Turner. We have, however, distinct and undeniable evidence, in the notes written by Turner for his engravers, that com-

position was with him a perfectly conscious mental process, and really a labor; and we have evidence in the sketches of many masters that they composed laboriously and tried many experiments in composition, just as an architect makes various sketches for a projected building before he selects the one that is to be elaborated in detail. I myself have seen painters of firmly established reputation trying experiments in composition as painfully as any student, yet they were reputed to be masters of that department of the art, and there is indeed no reason why a task should not be laborious and yet well performed; at the same time the most complete statement of the case would appear to be that although Imagination is the faculty of seeing images, and Composition is the art of putting images well together, a practical composer may from the first see his mental images in an artistic order, though he would probably improve upon it afterwards.

I find it impossible to resist the conclusion that composition is far more an art of taste, culture, and the knowledge of what has been already done, than an act of imaginative genius. Nothing is more common, even amongst artists



of ability, than the adoption of old forms of composition, slightly disguised ; as for example, in classical landscape the great clump of trees on one side, a smaller clump on the other, and a distance with hills of moderate height in the open space between them. This composition remains exactly the same in principle when the columns of a temple or palace are substituted for the clumps of trees, and it is not greatly varied in modern landscapes of lake scenery when rocky promontories are the *coulisses* and the ground is a watery plain with a mountainous vista in the middle. A little familiarity with the common receipts of composition enables us to detect old arrangements under what may at first seem quite impenetrable disguises, even, for example, the adaptation of a figure composition to the purposes of the landscape painter. The same composition, that is, the same arrangement of masses, may serve indifferently for a group of figures, a group of trees, shipping, or architecture. Burnet understood composition as an art of universal applicability in pictures, and he called it "angular composition," or "circular composition," the first including arrangements dominated by a diagonal line, or with points

like a diamond, the second, those curved arrangements that bear some resemblance to circles seen in perspective.

The practical value of composition can hardly be overrated as an addition to the charm of landscape subjects, they need it even more than figure-pictures as they have not the attraction of simulated life; but the reader will not expect in this place any attempt to investigate the art of landscape composition in detail, especially as I am but little disposed to confound it with Imagination. It is a special gift which, when it exists at all, may be further cultivated by education, and in the absence of the real gift a tolerably effective substitute for it is to be had in the stock receipts of painters which have helped many an ordinary artist through difficulties otherwise insurmountable. There are certain well-known solecisms in composition that no educated artist would ever fall into, and the common mistakes of the uneducated are not thought excusable on the ground of a lack of genius. It is well to learn what is ascertained, and well to practise the methods that have been confirmed by the experience of centuries, but it is a mistake to confound this

kind of educated ingenuity with imagination. The real gift of composition is but the gift of order in its highest and most beautiful manifestation, of order controlled by taste, but beyond this it does not appear to imply extraordinary mental powers.

## XIX.

### EFFECT AS THE EXPRESSION OF NATURE.

EVERY scene in the world has its favorable or unfavorable effects, — the effects that are specially suitable or unsuitable to that particular scene. Under the most favorable it seems like a revelation, but when the effect is not so well adapted to the particular scene (however perfectly it might have suited others), then the power of the landscape over our minds is reduced to its lowest degree.

This depends upon a union of the forms of the earth with cloud forms, and on the display of both under the light that gives them the most perfect unity, and brings the finest features of the landscape into the most distinct relief, whilst reducing all that is commonplace to a subordinate position. It is evident that such perfectly favorable effects are likely to be rare, but they do occur, and the busi-

ness of the imaginative artist is either to seize upon them when they do occur, or imagine them in their absence.

Now, we come to a matter of quite peculiar importance which underlies the influence of landscape art on man, and is probably its strongest force.

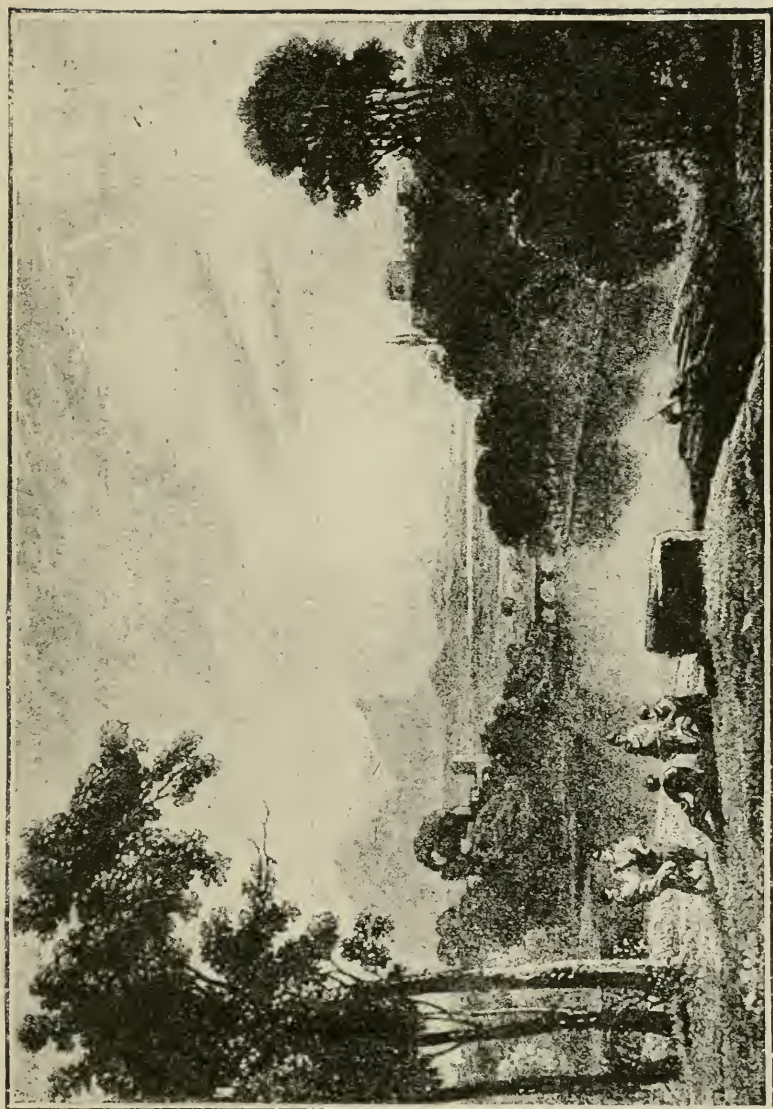
When we see — I mean we who are sensitive to these influences — when we see the kind of effect that we call an impressive or a noble effect, our feeling is distinctly that the wonderful powers of nature are expressing themselves to us, in an especial manner, by the display of that transient beauty, or splendor, or melancholy solemnity. It seems like a communication from the Eternal Source to short-lived mortals, and this impression is enhanced — immeasurably enhanced — by the remarkable fact that the grander effects last just long enough for our powers of attention. They also begin quietly, gradually increase in intensity, reach their highest perfection, and then rapidly fade in color, whilst the well-combined arrangement of form and light becomes disorganized. In this they exactly answer to our own capacity of attention, which is easily fatigued, and requires the most varied degrees

of excitement; and so the natural effect is incomparably more interesting than the fixed representation of it in painting.

The feeling that the Eternal Power is addressing itself to us by a sort of special revelation in the grandest effects is, I believe, quite illusory, so far as each special display is concerned, and yet it is an illusion, like the familiar one that the sun really rises, which one cannot overcome at the moment; nor, for my part, do I wish to overcome it. Here the Imagination may be permitted a degree of liberty that cannot very greatly deceive any of us, for although we may flatter ourselves too much in supposing that the effect was made for us personally, it is still a part of the general beauty of the world which makes the world what it is to us, at the same time habitation and so much more, the medium by which the unseen Power is constantly acting upon us.

The manner of the influence is by affecting our states of feeling; and here there is this to be noted, that if the feeling is not in ourselves already, the effects of nature are perfectly impotent to excite it. All they can do is to deepen or intensify feelings that already exist,





EVENING. R. WILSON.



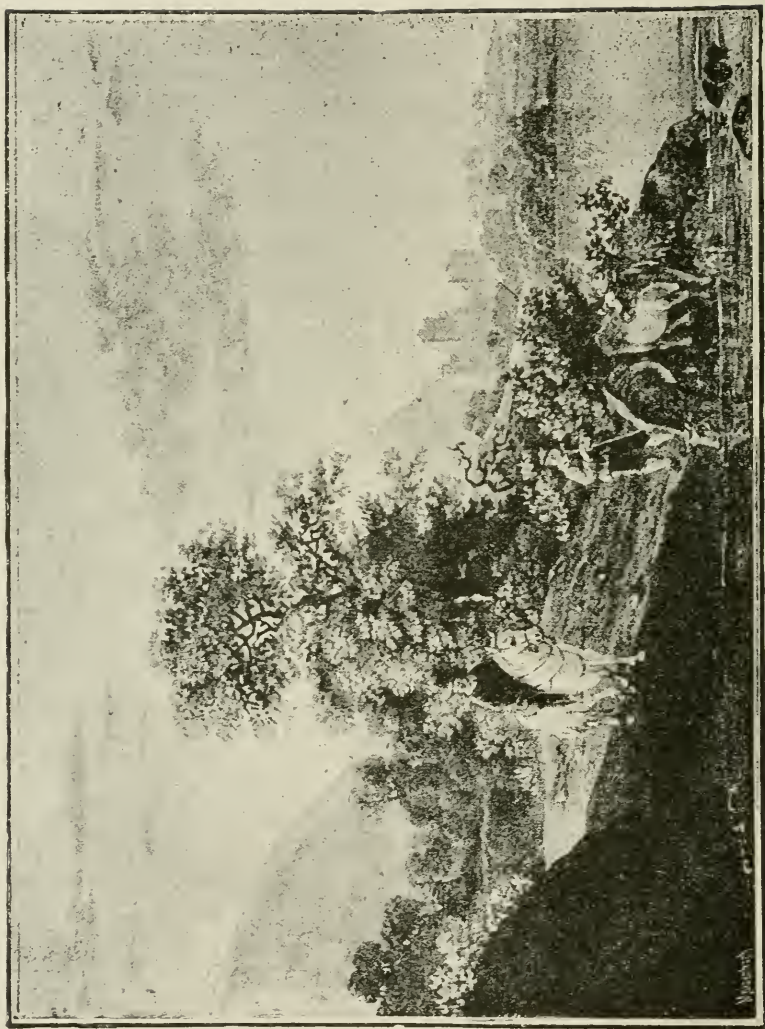
at least potentially. The strongest and most ready men of action do not seem to be in the least affected by that which would impress an artist profoundly, and move a poet to tears; they attend to what concerns their affairs, and look to some practical result.

Our own experience in such extremely personal matters as those that concern feeling is all that we can really know. I have a friend who is deeply impressed by effects that seemed to me at one time utterly insignificant, and that do not strike me even to-day as having any other quality than that of extreme delicacy, but they are evidently in close relation to his mental idiosyncrasy, which is an uncommonly refined one, and they give him the sort of happiness which results from the feeling that the world, for a short time at least, is exactly suitable to our taste. It must then become for him a sort of temporary heaven, as it certainly is for me under effects of an entirely different character. I sometimes wonder if there is anybody else in the world on whom the effects of landscape have as much influence as they have on me. There are two very opposite kinds of effect that I delight in equally. A gray sky with shreds of rain-

cloud flying before the wind, highland hills all russet in late autumn, and a dark lake flecked with foam on the crests of ten thousand waves; an effect of this kind renews lost youth for me, and creates at once a sort of Northern paradise dearer than the lands of the vine. In the South there are effects of a milder enchantment, especially in summer evenings, when the heat of the day is over, leaving a soft glow in the serene sky, and making the rich woods look richer than ever, the wheat-fields glow with a deeper gold, and the distant mountains, range behind range, darken to Titian's own azure. Under this effect the world seems to me a paradise of poetic rest, as the Northern effect made it a heaven of healthy energy.

To attempt any account, even the most succinct, of the uses that landscape artists have made of effect as a means of influence upon our minds would be to weary the reader with a repetition of much that he knows already. The reader is well aware that effect is the supreme power in landscape-painting, that it arouses or soothes the feelings like music, that it ennobles the humblest materials, and adds grandeur and dignity to the grandest





THE TRAVELLER. CUYP.

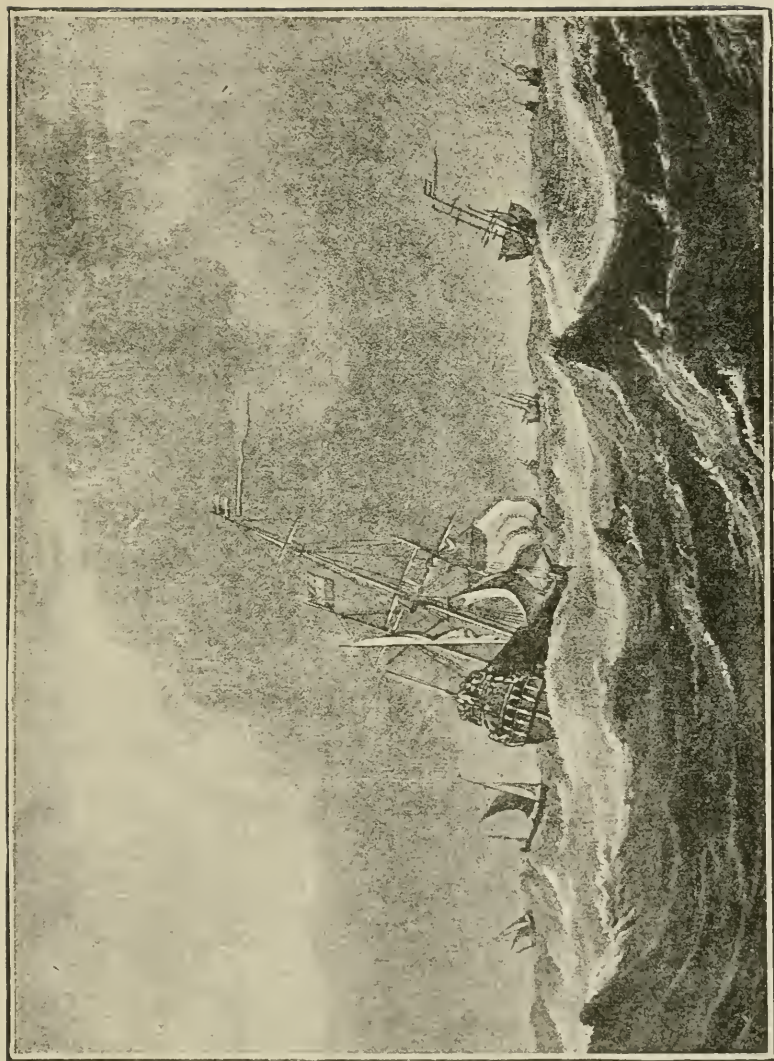


and most noble. Without effect the finest landscapes in nature have but little power on the mind; aided by beautiful or impressive effects the poorest subjects become pictures. This being so it is not surprising that all the most imaginative landscape-painters have looked to effect as the secret of their power over their fellow-men, and that their imaginations have been exercised far more in the creation or selection of effects than in the portrayal of tangible and measurable things.

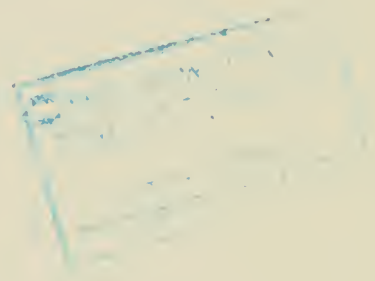
Nevertheless, as drawing is the foundation of art, the love of effect is sometimes looked upon by able draughtsmen as the sign of an inferior capacity, and we know that transient and accidental effects were condemned in the last century as being incompatible with the "Grand Style." This arose from a confusion between figure and landscape art. Certainly, in painting a human face it is a deviation of attention to think about sunshine and shadow instead of thinking about the man's character and history, but in landscape the character of the scene depends so greatly upon effect that it acquires an expressional value, which is the equivalent in landscape for the changing expressions of the human face. So far from

being incompatible with style, the study of effect is a positive encouragement to it by massing details together, and by permitting, or even requiring a breadth of treatment which would be applied with far greater difficulty to the obtrusive details of an effectless landscape. It is this tranquil breadth that makes the charm of many old masters, who certainly could not draw detail with a delicacy at all comparable to that of our most able contemporary book illustrators in England and America. Look at Wilson, for example, what infinite calm there is in his quiet Italian afternoon or evening scenes ! There are no landscapes more tranquillizing if we enjoy them in the right spirit ; that is, if we quietly accept their influence without setting up tiresome critical objections. The long, warm afternoon is slowly waning, — so slowly that it seems as if it would be always afternoon ; or the summer evening lingers yet, when the sun has sunk behind tree and tower and the lakelet lies asleep in its basin.

The reputation of Cuyp is largely due to his quiet afternoon sentiment and to the degree of imagination, not very elevated or very powerful, but still genuine of its kind, which



A GALE. W. VANDEVELDE.



enabled him to put himself in the place of a traveller riding through a land of sunshine, on a summer's day, and coming perhaps on a white or light-gray horse, as yet but little wearied, to some ford in a tranquil river. Without the imaginative sentiment of effect what would be the charm or value of pictures such as these?

In marine pictures the range lies chiefly between the extremes of calm and storm. This, of course, is connected with imaginative reference to the fates of men, to the quiet labor done by fishermen in calm weather, and the rough, dangerous work of sailors in a tempest; but besides this sympathy with sailors there is always an undercurrent of possibly unconscious reference to the lives of all human beings whatever, for we have all our range of experience between tranquillity and unrest, and we are all of us liable, almost as sailors are, to see our tranquillity disturbed.

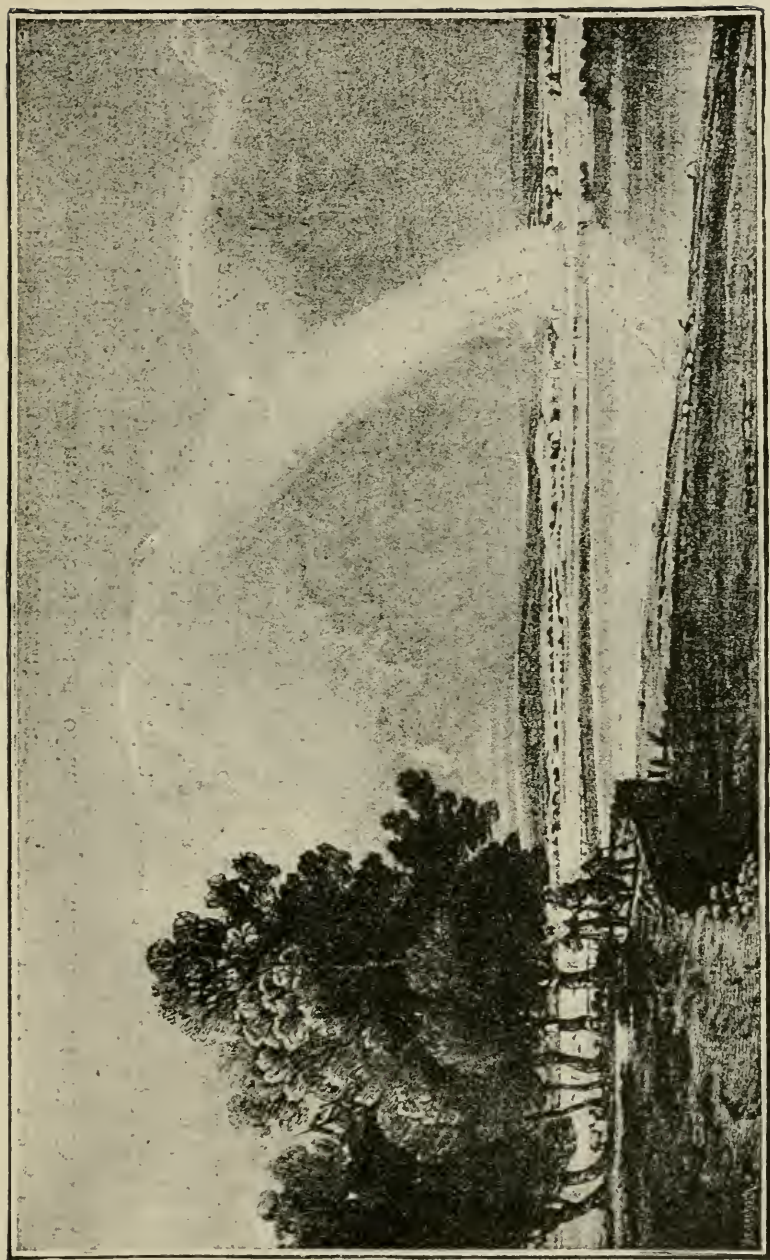
The value of the tranquillity of the sea, in imaginative connection with human life, was very ably appreciated by Mr. Poole when he painted his picture entitled *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In this picture a sailor boy is lying asleep on a rocky shore, and behind

him a wide expanse of sea is rippling gently under an unseen moon. The picture was very impressive, and the power of it was entirely due to the imagined connection between nature and human life. Some readers will remember how Alexander Smith, in his poetry, was constantly using the sea in this manner for its expression of tumult or repose; and I think he spoke of it as being "asleep in moonlight," exactly like Mr. Poole's boy.

Turner's science of effects is absolutely without rivalry for variety; but Girtin, in a far more limited range, showed quite as strong an appreciation of imaginative sentiment in effects. There could not be a better lesson concerning the value of such a sentiment than to take a few of Girtin's most impressive drawings and copy the material things in them only, without any effect whatever. It would then be seen how meagre the materials were in comparison with the richness of the sentimental and imaginative clothing with which he was able to invest them.

In some of the narrower graphic arts the artist has to restrict himself to a very limited choice amongst the effects of nature. For example, in the kind of pen-drawing now so





ON THE RIVER EXE. T. GIRTIN.

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frequently done for typographic reproduction it is useless to attempt delicate effects, and the stronger ones can only be represented conventionally with such simple means as a pen and perfectly black ink. When the ink may be diluted, as in pen-drawing not done for reproduction, the case is entirely altered and the imagination has a wider range. A singular consequence results from these technical restrictions, which is that those who love effects the most attempt them the least willingly in the limited arts. I observed to an excellent professional pen draughtsman that he never attempted skies, and soon discovered from his conversation that it was because he appreciated and understood those qualities which were unapproachable in his art. A draughtsman of less delicate perceptions would not have been so abstinent, would not have laid himself open to the charge of blank indifference to that which he really loved in nature and probably appreciated far better than his critics. Nevertheless, by a bold and frank conventionalism, some skies may be treated with the pen, but never the most delicate ones.

It may be observed that the art of etching,

which is not suitable to all effects, is remarkably well adapted to some evening effects of a kind that appeals very powerfully to the imagination. Here, for example, is a plate by Mr. Chattock, representing a long, low, wooden bridge across a shallow stream going to some cottages. Beyond the bridge is a wood of leafless trees, and through the trees may be seen a silvery river winding away in the distance beneath a low, dark hill; the sky contains only some light wavy clouds. The sentiment of such a scene could not have been conveyed more perfectly in any art. We do not even feel the absence of color. Technically, the success of the plate may be attributed to the depth obtained in the dark trees by a vigorous biting, and to the contrasting lightness of the wavy dry point lines in the sky. The imaginative importance of these technical powers would be understood by attempting to translate this etching into a pen-drawing reproducible by a typographic process.

## XX.

### SUBSTANCE AND EFFECT.

THE scientific conception of nature is always without effect, and so is the common or practical conception. In these cases the mind abstracts from nature the qualities that concern the science or the practical business, and dwells upon them to the exclusion of others, — a process which is absolutely necessary to efficient scientific or practical thinking, but outside of the artistic imagination. All modern conceptions of landscape, whether in the brain of the poet or the painter, include effect as well as substance.

I have already briefly alluded to a common confusion between the resources of the figure-painter and the landscape-painter, by which the importance of effect to the latter is much under-rated. In many pictures of the figure it is evident that the artist, so far from seeking

strong effects of light and shade, has positively been at some pains to avoid them by placing his model in such open and diffused light that it is well seen, but nothing more. You cannot affirm on which side the light strikes more than on the other, you do not know what time of day it is, nor the season of the year, nor the nature of the weather. There is no light and shade, though there are lights and darks; the eyes are dark perhaps, and the hair; the linen may be white, and the costume brown or black. In pictures of this nature the interest is independent of effect; it depends on the personages represented, and we think of what they were and did; we think of Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth, and not of sun or shadow.

Another way in which the art that deals with the figure often widely differs from landscape — I mean from fully developed modern landscape — is in the accentuation or neglect of line. The figure-painter may still often proceed, without reproach, very much upon the principles followed by the designer of an Etruscan vase; he may rely, first of all, on clean linear definition, especially in decorative work, drawing all outlines firmly and carefully, and afterwards filling up the spaces so enclosed



with color. This is the process natural to primitive art, the first inevitable process that we find everywhere from China to Egypt, from Egypt through Greece and Rome to mediæval France and England; and it is therefore not at all surprising that there should be a strong temptation to fall back upon such a process, even in later ages, since it is the easiest and the most natural to man. It is, however, the very worst of all possible preparations for modern landscape-painting, an art in which the mapping out of substances by frontier lines is contrary alike to sentiment and to truth.

You may map out a man's leg and boot with clear lines, and fill up the thigh part with the color of the cloth he wears, and the lower part with black for the leather, and you will have a recognizable leg and boot. Not only that, but if the artist is a very able draughtsman his ability will be evident. You will say that his line is pure, that its curves are beautiful, that he has studied the ancient Greeks, and if his pictures are of an Academic character, you will say that he ought to be made a Royal Academician.

If a landscape-painter worked on the same

principles of line and mass without mystery and effect, you would probably not see his work, because it would hardly be received in the exhibitions; but if, by chance, it were accepted, you would condemn it as dry and hard, and deplore especially its lack of feeling and imagination.

The two kinds of art are not measured in the same measure or weighed in the same balance. Sound and careful drawing is so much valued in the figure that it condones for the absence of effect, and Academies are willing, for the sake of it, to tolerate the most mediocre color. In landscape-painting, on the contrary, an artist who draws carefully gets no thanks, but he may win success by effect and color when his drawing is almost formless.

The reason for this difference has been already given. It is because in figure-painting expression may be obtained by the mere tension or relaxation of muscles and the animation of the eyes, all which is an affair of drawing; whereas in landscape-painting expression is given to every scene by effects of light and shade and of color. Therefore in landscape-painting effect is of more importance, and substance of less, than in any other form of art.

I may observe, by way of parenthesis, that this is a misfortune for landscape-painters, as it takes away from under their feet the only *positive* basis on which the art of painting is founded, and if a landscape-painter does not hit the public taste by his effects there is nothing for him to appeal to. In landscape one might draw as well as Gérôme without having the slightest chance, whilst some clever interpreter of natural effects or ingenious inventor of studio effects was painting his way to fortune. I am far from desiring to undervalue the work of figure-painters, well knowing what a price of industry and perseverance they have to pay for their success; but I say that in having a positive sort of work to do, that is measurable when it is done, they enjoy a great practical advantage over landscape-painters, who catch and interpret the most fugitive effects, their success in doing so being in its nature what neither they themselves nor their most favorable critics can demonstrate, yet what anybody may deny.

The sense of the necessity for effect in landscape is so general that the worst landscape-painters aim at effect as their great object, often failing much less from lack of

appreciation of it in nature than from ignorance of tonic and chromatic relations. The best landscape-painters have exactly the same aim, the difference between the two cases being that greater delicacy of perception gives a more refined quality to the work, whilst superior strength of memory and fecundity of invention make it fuller and more interesting.

Between these two classes of painters of effect — the worst and the best of landscape-painters — comes an intermediate class, entangled in matter, laboriously endeavoring to realize substance, deserving all the honor that may be due to painstaking endeavor, yet never touching the heart of the public, and, notwithstanding all their knowledge and all their manual skill, passing through life like other ordinary workmen, with certain oblivion at the end of it. The case of these men seems all the harder that their knowledge is often sounder than that of the effect-painters, and certainly it is more positive, more amenable to exact criticism. It has happened to me many a time to come upon their strong and observant work, and to think, "What knowledge is here! what energy and study have been expended to gain the power of producing this!" and yet I

know that it cannot be immortal work, that the artist is only like some traveller or journalist who toils for the passing hour. Meanwhile some poet, with perhaps not half this knowledge, will see the poetic aspects of things and paint them far more slightly, but so that his canvas shall be a joy forever. In literature there are many such examples. What *substance* is there in some of the most charming verses? What substance is there in Poe? On the other hand, the most substantial parts of Wordsworth are often a dead weight and his lighter work more enduring, whilst even in Scott the substance is now telling against him — his Pegasus is clad in armor, and encumbered by it.

The progress of a landscape-painter appears to be through a kind of materialism to a visionary idealism by which he attains in its full perfection the artistic estimate of things. Materialism appears to be necessary as a stage, but only as a stage. If we began landscape-painting in the visionary stage we should be too ignorant of matter, and our painting would be like a dress without a body inside it. Suppose the case of an amateur of genius passing to the visionary stage without dwelling long

enough in the study of things, his painting might be poetical, but it would be flimsy and weak, and would not be taken seriously by artists. They would prefer sound materialist work, that is, work in the second stage. In other words, artists prefer work showing sound progress, as far as it has gone, to premature accomplishment.

It may make my meaning clearer if I take a special example, such as a full-grown oak. Considered as matter it is a column of the strongest wood we have, with a foundation much firmer than that of ordinary stakes and piles. The column is so strong that with its immense head of foliage it usually resists the most furious gales of our latitudes. No edifice built by man, with the single exception of a lighthouse, has foundations in any way comparable to its foundations.

An artist much impressed with this idea of strength would probably draw the oak with hard firm outlines, and give its rugged character with great force and truth, but he would pay less attention to the light and shade and color. In a more advanced stage, he would think of light and color more and think of them together. Finally, in the visionary stage,



an oak would be to him simply a variety of color masses with their gradations and much confusion of mystery in leaves and branches. In this completely artistic way of seeing things there is no necessity for thinking about matter, though it is represented with a higher kind of truth, as to its appearances, than by students who think of substance.

We are all of us visionary artists for one familiar object, the moon. We do not think of the heavy globe of rock with prodigious cloudless mountains, sun-heated to an intolerable temperature. That is the scientific conception that we keep in some odd corner of the brain for use when it may be wanted, as one keeps a scientific instrument in a drawer; but in ordinary times the moon means for us a crescent or a disc of silvery and sometimes of golden splendor, the brightest thing that we are able to look upon in nature. Now to sever, in this way, the splendor of the moon from the idea of her reality, her substance, is exactly the artistic way of seeing. An accomplished artist sees terrestrial things in the same way, as so much splendor or gloom. He sees a bridge under the moon, and thinks no more of the granite in the bridge than of the lunar

granite, if the moon is made of anything like granite. The bridge is a certain tone of color, the moon is a certain degree of brightness.

All nature, as seen by an artist in the most advanced condition of culture, is but a variety of colored spaces. One thing is hardly more material than another. The lead-covered dome of a distant church may be quite near to the tone and color of a cloud, and scarcely seem more opaque. The sea has been sometimes really taken for a wall, and a roof for a mountain. In scenery where the Alps are sometimes visible on the horizon, but not always visible, clouds are often taken for mountains and mountains for clouds; in fact, they are not distinguishable at all by tone and color, nor do the distant mountains look more substantial; the only sure distinction is in the mountain forms, which require to be known scientifically for perfect certitude. It used to be one of the faults commonly found with Turner that his land did not look substantial, especially where it met the sky; and certainly the more he advanced in art the less did his mind distinguish between substance and effect, till it finally seemed almost to lose the sense of substance, and the world became

for him a vision, or succession of visions, in which castle, cloud, and mountain-peak, were all of them only what dreams are made of.

If, however, it is true that progress in art leads to this visionary state, and that so illusory a condition is the final attainment of the painter, we have to ask ourselves whether it may not be injurious in one way to the imagination itself; for if the imagination loses its hold of fact how can it retain its vigor?

It is a very delicate and difficult question to answer, because this perfection of art is perilously near to its decline, and depends upon the degree of permanence that may be granted to the faculties of particular human beings. I should say, however, that when an artist mind loses the sense of substance, the vision of the world becomes for it what Wordsworth aptly called "eye music," and that painting is then no longer a study of tangible things at all, but a dream like the dreams of a musician. Then comes a new exercise of the imagination, which no longer occupies itself with imaginary scenes and things, but only with sequences and relations, — in short, it becomes musically creative. It may perceive the most unsuspected relations between color and form in landscape, and in

other things that are commonly supposed to have no relation to landscape, and even in accidental combinations of mere pigments, as when Turner got three children to dabble water-colors together till he suddenly stopped them at the propitious moment. These researches and exercises may easily be condemned as trifling, or even as a desertion of nature, but they are certainly not a desertion of art, for they may be a color-music without



INVERARY CASTLE. TURNER.

meaning, invented by the imagination, exactly as there is a sound-music without meaning, or, at least, of which the meaning could not possibly be expressed in any other language than its own. Therefore, when we come to this kind of imagination, in which substance is

either banished altogether or reduced to a minimum, whilst the delicacies of color are retained, the only intelligent way of considering it is to think of it as an art existing on its own basis, which is almost, though not quite, independent of Nature.







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